



# strategic

## development group



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FINAL REPORT- DFAT

# MID TERM REVIEW OF THE DFAT SOUTH ASIA REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM

18 January, 2024

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Mid Term Review of the South Asia Regional Infrastructure Connectivity Program

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

The South Asia Regional Infrastructure Connectivity (SARIC) program is an Australian Government-funded initiative seeking to address constraints to economic growth in South Asia, particularly weak infrastructure investments and lagging regional connectivity. The program works in partnership with the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) to assist host governments in preparing a pipeline of transport and energy projects that connect the economies in the region eligible for public and/or private financing. The SARIC program also seeks to train and connect individuals and institutions from the public and private sectors to contribute to regional connectivity projects.

According to the Terms of Reference (ToR) and Evaluation Plan, the purpose of the MTR is to assess results and progress towards outcomes and impacts and to provide recommendations and lessons for the remaining program period. While the program operates across the region, the MTR has focused its fieldwork on stakeholders in Nepal and Bangladesh, including engagement with program partners at the Singapore-based Working Group meeting and with program beneficiaries from across the region. The MTR spans implementation from commencement in January 2019 to September 2023.

The Evaluation Plan lays out the approach and methodology, which was primarily qualitative. Document review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and an e-survey were carried out. Analysis was undertaken via qualitative coding and triangulation methods. An Aide Memoire was prepared and presented to the Working Group on 26 October 2023, followed by a draft report on 10 November 2023. Substantial feedback was provided, and the MTR report was significantly revised.

## Findings

Findings are presented in the report according to the OECD-DAC Criteria<sup>1</sup> and by Evaluation Question, summarised here.

### *Relevance*

SARIC remains highly relevant in addressing, supporting and guiding infrastructure provision in South Asia. SARIC, in working with government and private sector counterparts to select projects that have a regional connectivity lens, seeks to support country partners to continue to shift the perspective towards that regional approach. The SARIC program is relevant to the needs of its intended beneficiaries, and the designation of “eligible” countries<sup>2</sup> ensures that the project is not proscriptive, and the selected delivery mechanisms allow for ample flexibility in responding to the needs of the recipients. The project remains highly relevant to the priorities of DFAT, World Bank and IFC.

The strategy adopted to deliver against its objectives is found to be sound, and the selection of energy and transport sectors to promote and foster regional connectivity is relevant to the context. SARIC's delivery approach and partnership arrangements are realistic, appropriate and adequate for achieving its ambitious end-of-program objectives and broader impacts in the region. The MTR found that the more traditional DFAT Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) delivery model (e.g., via a managing contractor) of components 1 and 2 is unlikely to have enabled the same level of access nor

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

<sup>2</sup> “Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Maldives are eligible for SARIC assistance. Additional countries that facilitate connections between South Asia and Southeast Asia may be added to SARIC programming” (SARIC Operations Manual, p. 6)



depth of engagement with recipient actors. The approach to delivering the Training and Networking Services (TNS) component has also been found to be appropriate and realistic.

### *Coherence*

The MTR found that SARIC is well aligned with other infrastructure initiatives in the region. SARIC was noted to be an integral part of the World Bank's long-term efforts to foster regional connectivity in South Asia. SARIC sits within the World Bank South Asia Regional Integration, Cooperation and Engagement (SA RICE) program which supports regional integration via a number of trust fund initiatives. The SARIC program presents many opportunities for the partners to work together and effectively. The TNS component provides a clear example as to how the partnership operates jointly. The Working Group itself also lends itself to promoting a joint response of partners, providing an opportunity to share activities, opportunities and challenges with the program teams. A number of activities within SARIC present opportunities for governments to work together, again with a focus on the TNS component.

### *Effectiveness*

While the initial stages of the program were hindered by COVID-19, after this slow start the program was found to be delivering at pace, with a clear pipeline of support to government and private sector actors from the three components, which are likely to deliver results by the end of the program. The MTR found that the program is likely to deliver results against the EOIOs by the end of the program. The MTR found that the lack of clearly articulated and mutually agreed qualitative and quantitative targets (end of program and milestones) may be a contributing factor to the evident mismatch in expectations between the partners as to what should have been achieved by this stage of the program.

With regards to progress against outcomes and outputs, while the latest Annual Report stated it was too early in implementation to report on this intermediate outcome, the MTR found some evidence for emerging results for intermediate outcomes 1, 2 and 3. Progress against outputs is presented, with examples of evidence provided, and case studies for specific activities can be found in Annex 8.

Overall, the M&E Framework as outlined in the Operations Manual provides a solid foundation for SARIC, however a detailed critique is provided with practical recommendations to improve program monitoring, reporting and learning. The MTR found that the Working Group meetings provide a valuable opportunity for partners to come together and share progress and lessons between reporting cycles, there are areas of the originally agreed objectives that are not currently being addressed. The MTR team found the SARIC program management strategy to be relatively unique in that program leadership, coordination and management of trust fund partners and managing contractors is carried out by the DFAT Investment Manager.

### *Efficiency*

With regards to expenditure, the MTR found that SARIC delivery partners were slow to spend in the first half of the program up to September 2023. The difference in allocation and commitment of funding is important to note, as until activities are approved and contracts with clients and delivery agents are signed, the funds remain "unspent". One factor driving efficiency is the way in which SARIC utilises the existing World Bank and IFC implementation processes to engage with government and private sector actors, building on decades of experience and lessons, rather than developing new, program-specific processes from scratch.

Value for Money, in terms of leveraging other finance and support for wider impacts, is inherent to the SARIC program. SARIC is also effectively leveraging additional finance to deliver greater impact. The SARIC program builds on existing momentum in the region for support to invest in the infrastructure space, and the program effectively adds value without duplicating the efforts of others.



### *Impact*

As a program, SARIC has made progress on several separate projects and initiatives, which, considered together, are delivering the foundations for transformative impact. Examples of change as a result of SARIC funding on government and private sector entities are provided. The MTR found that SARIC is broadly on track to deliver its EoIOs. Regarding gender impacts, the MTR found that a strength for SARIC is its reliance on internal partner processes in that the program benefits from the WB/IFC's internationally recognised ESG best practice in working on complex infrastructure investments.

### *Sustainability*

The MTR finds that sustainability is built into the SARIC theory of change, given it provides support to a number of policy change and infrastructure development activities with much larger and longer-term impacts beyond the life of SARIC. Given the support of the World Bank and IFC will continue to be provided to the governments in the region, as part of their country strategies, the concept of an exit strategy is not entirely relevant to the SARIC program. The TNS component is more likely to come up against challenges in phasing out of its work, particularly in managing the alumni networks and engaging in any performance stories and reviews of capacity of institutions in the region.

### *Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion*

There is an implicit gender theory of change running through SARIC. This cross-cutting approach to GEDSI within SARIC leans heavily on partners existing commitments and internal processes to ensure that GEDSI consideration are incorporated into investments and highlighted in TNS activities. MTR consultations highlighted a gap in understanding among partners of each other's internal GEDSI approaches, standards and commitments, however analysis of partner's internal GEDSI commitments and processes clearly demonstrates a shared and common approach to GEDSI at a strategic and policy level between SARIC partners. World Bank and IFC's independent GEDSI processes at a project level are well developed to ensure consideration of GEDSI at the project-planning stage and throughout the future pipeline of projects. For Palladium, a tailored GEDSI strategy guides their approach to the provision of TNS activities for SARIC and seeks to respond to the need for improved capacity within implementing partners and networking opportunities between professional in the region.

With regards to the implementation of GEDSI approaches, opportunities exist within SARIC's current operating context to strengthen information flows on this issue. The MTR found that the TNS component has a crucial role to play in SARIC's impact on GEDSI by supporting the mainstreaming of GEDSI content into all training activities.

### *Climate Change*

The MTR finds that the SARIC program lends itself well to supporting climate resilience in its focus on energy and transport infrastructure for economic connectivity in the region, and in working with expert program partners with high standards of climate smart and environmental safeguarding procedures. By working with the World Bank and IFC, SARIC is operating according to progressive analysis methods and solutions that incorporate climate risks, mitigation and adaptation elements as standard practice. The MTR found that SARIC is working with governments that are largely supportive of climate resilient infrastructure development, which is an enabling factor in allowing program partners to incorporate climate smart development methods and approaches in their support to government and private sector. Many of the projects carried out under SARIC are providing direct support to government and private sector that promotes consideration and action on climate. A key barrier related to government support is in the tension between the benefits of importing green power, and the inability to report carbon emissions reductions on imported energy due to the global emissions reporting protocols. There are opportunities to increase consideration and action promoting climate resilience, such as the potential to share lessons and knowledge across borders.



## Recommendations

A range of suggestions are made throughout the report to improve the program, and the priority actions have been brought together into the following list of 10 recommendations:

### *Working Group Meetings*

1. It is recommended that the DFAT Investment Manager, as Chair, updates the Working Group Meeting agenda to incorporate the areas discussed in section 2.3.6 and with reference to the suggested agenda presented in Annex 5. Specific areas for inclusion are partner reporting of progress against outcome, intermediate outcome and output level result statements, and validity of the program and assessment of financial progress.
2. It is recommended that the DFAT Investment Manager in collaboration with the SARIC partners develop a thematic focus area for alternate Working Group meetings, drawing in TTLs and DFAT post representatives to share thematic expertise and lessons from implementation.

### *Early-Stage Project Identification*

3. It is recommended that IFC and World Bank provide additional information on the process of early-stage project identification, by incorporating progress at this stage of work in program updates at Working Group Meetings, with basic information on sector, type of activity and timeline of expenditure.
4. It is recommended that DFAT lead a discussion with the Steering Committee and come to agreement on whether and how any additional meaningful consultation with DFAT could take place at this stage of project selection.

### *Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting*

5. It is recommended that the M&E Coordinator works closely with all partners to develop and agree on targets at output, intermediate outcome, and outcome levels of the results framework.
6. It is recommended that the M&E Coordinator, in collaboration with partner M&E Coordinators, to revise the reporting template so that it gathers progress and achievements against output and outcome results statement and indicators.
7. It is recommended that the DFAT Investment Manager review and discuss with SARIC partners the proposed improvements to program M&E including the adjustments suggested in Annex 6.

### *Risk Management*

8. It is recommended that World Bank and IFC provide additional plans to bolster threat monitoring activities, and plans for engagement with DFAT on identifying political and/or diplomatic inroads to support the enabling environment.

### *Visibility*

9. It is recommended that all partners play a role in improving the brand identity of SARIC, firstly by working with Palladium to use the LinkedIn platform to tell stories of change, and more broadly to communicate the message of transport and energy corridors being created in the region.

### *GEDSI*

10. It is recommended that WB and IFC increase the visibility of their internal GEDSI processes within SARIC-supported project cycles (particularly project gender tagging, ESF processes, social assessment and feasibility reporting); and that Palladium continues to prioritise inclusive infrastructure training and support, and seek out opportunities to integrate disability inclusion.



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Acronym	Definition
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASI	Adam Smith International
BBIN	Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal
BBIRI	Building Blocks for Inclusive Regional Infrastructure
CPA	Chittagong Ports Authority
EOIO	End of Investment Outcomes
ESF	Environmental and Social Framework
ESG	Environmental, Social and Gender
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
DFAT	Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
EQ	Evaluation Question
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
IDD	Investment Design Document
IFC	International Finance Corporation
KII	Key Informant Interview
LSTP	Large Systems Training Program
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MTR	Mid Term Review
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PSEAH	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
RAP	Resilient Asia Program
RGAP	Regional Gender Action Plan
RIPC	Regional Integration Programs Committee
SA RICE	South Asia Regional Integration, Cooperation and Engagement
SAREP	South Asia Regional Energy Partnership
SARI/EI	South Asia Regional Initiative for Energy Integration
SARIC	South Asia Regional Infrastructure Connectivity
SARTF	South Asia Regional Trade Facilitation
TA	Technical Assistance
TNS	Training and Networking Services
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UK FCDO	United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
USC	University of the Sunshine Coast
WB	World Bank



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The South Asia Regional Infrastructure Connectivity (SARIC) program is a \$32 million Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) funded multi country program implemented by the World Bank, IFC and training partner Palladium in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, plus additional countries in the region as relevant (e.g. Pakistan).

The program, running from 2019 to 2024, aims to support host governments to prepare a pipeline of transport and energy projects that connect the economies in the region eligible for public and/or private financing, while building the capacity and network of individuals and institutions in public and private sectors to contribute to connectivity projects in the region. The program seeks to address low levels of investment in transport and energy connectivity that contribute to South Asia's poor record on regional trade and economic integration. The End of Investment Outcomes (EoIOs) of SARIC are:

- A pipeline of quality connectivity investments in energy and transport infrastructure that have progressed opportunities for private and/or public financing
- Individuals and institutions connected to SARIC contribute to cross-border exchange and facilitation of connectivity projects

The purpose of the Mid Term Review (MTR) was to assess results and progress towards outcomes along with an initial assessment of emerging impacts, with a view to providing recommendations and lessons for the remaining program period. While the program operates across South Asia, the MTR focused its field work with stakeholders in Nepal and Bangladesh, including engagement with program partners at the Singapore based Working Group meeting, and with program beneficiaries from across the region (see below) in a training exercise in Hobart as a sample of training activities.

The MTR covers the SARIC investment implementation period from commencement in January 2019 to September 2023. It encompasses the work of DFAT, International Finance Corporation (IFC), World Bank, Palladium and Adam Smith International (ASI), and their results as they relate to the direct beneficiaries of energy and transport sector infrastructure and connectivity technical assistance, training and networking, and other support, namely government counterparts and private sector actors. Indirect beneficiaries, including the communities and institutions likely to benefit from improved infrastructure, will be considered in terms of impact trajectories, however, do not form part of the scope of this review. Partnerships and collaboration with adjacent actors, such as DFAT posts, are considered in terms of SARIC partners' outputs and outcomes, and in gaining an understanding of the enabling environment for the investment.

## 1.1 Methodology

This MTR is both formative and summative in nature and focuses on lessons learned from the initial implementation phase to provide findings and recommendations for the remaining investment period. The revised set of Evaluation Questions (EQs), set out in the Terms of Reference (ToR) and subsequent Evaluation Plan according to OECD-DAC criteria<sup>3</sup> provided a guide the review team in their data collection, analysis and generation of evidence.

As set out in the Evaluation Plan, the team conducted a primarily qualitative approach, plus some quantitative analysis, to meet the summative and process evaluation requirements of the MTR. The MTR team based its analysis on document review, key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs), plus a short e-survey. Our analysis methods are outlined below, and the approved Evaluation Plan is set out in Annex 9.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>





Data was analysed according to the MTR Qualitative Evidence Table (coded and triangulated), which brought together all of the evidence and their sources, coded by the MTR team according to source type, evaluation criteria, evaluation question, and results statement. The Evidence Table contains direct quotes from key informants so for ethical reasons the full table cannot be shared. Evidence is categorised and coded, which enabled the MTR team to sort and triangulate the data systematically across sources. The final evidence table for this MTR included 540 lines of evidence collected throughout the review period.

Emerging findings and recommendations were summarised in a 6-page Aide Memoire and presented to the Working Group members on 26 October 2023, followed by discussion and feedback for validation. The first draft of the MTR Report was submitted on 10 November 2023, and feedback from DFAT and the SARIC program partners were consolidated and shared with the MTR team on 28 November 2023. A follow up discussion took place on 1 December 2023, where the MTR team clarified several points of feedback. The MTR team prepared a table of comments, MTR Team responses (accepted, not accepted, further notes) and proposed actions, which was shared and agreed as a way forward with DFAT over email. In response to the comments, further analysis and considerable rewriting was undertaken to deliver this final report.

## 1.2 Limitations

The data collection phase was protracted, from 11 Sep 2023 to 12 October, which was partly due to the need for a rapid mobilisation to carry out in country KIIs/FGDs (due to upcoming elections), the unanticipated opportunity to engage with TNS activities in Hobart in October 2023, and the availability of key informants. This resulted in a reduced analysis phase in preparation of the first draft. The e-survey, although circulated to direct beneficiaries by Task Team Leaders (TTLs) was only completed by one respondent, and as such has not been included in the analysis or findings. A further limitation relates to the format of primary data collection in country. Standard KII protocols involve one or two members of the MTR team, plus the selected key informant (possibly 2-3), and the independence of the MTR team members allows the respondent to make candid and honest observations and responses to semi structured questions. During the MTR field trip, many KIIs were carried out with additional project representatives present, with some KIIs attended by 8 people, including senior program partners representatives and the donor (DFAT). This arrangement may have influenced the key informants and their responses, and led to confusion by others when the additional stakeholders joined the conversation rather than attended purely for observational purposes.



## 2. FINDINGS

In this section, the MTR team presents a discussion of the review findings according to the evaluation criteria and related Evaluation Questions, including related recommendations. Priority recommendations are synthesised and presented in the Recommendations Section (Section 3).

### 2.1 Relevance

#### 2.1.1 EQ1. To what extent does the SARIC remain relevant in addressing, supporting and guiding infrastructure provision in South Asia?

The review team considered this evaluation question to be interrogating the “problem statement” that SARIC is seeking to address, i.e., what are the key problems in infrastructure provision and connectivity in the South Asia region, and is SARIC set up to respond appropriately?

Connectivity is defined in SARIC in terms of movement (people and goods) and trade across borders, beyond bilateral transactions and towards meaningful multi-country agreements (political and market based) that bring mutual benefits to the region. A raft of measures is needed to contribute to regional connectivity, including quality improvements to infrastructure provision:

- political buy-in, policy and regulatory frameworks
- public and private financing and market readiness
- public sector capacity to procure and manage contracts
- private sector capacity and skills to deliver large contracts

In seeking to improve regional connectivity and the quality of infrastructure in the South Asia region via locally driven infrastructure projects with specific objectives for connectivity, the MTR found that **SARIC remains highly relevant in addressing, supporting and guiding infrastructure provision in South Asia.**

**Infrastructure provision is a critical element in supporting improved regional economic connectivity, particularly in the energy and transport (including logistics) sectors,** and the MTR found a multitude of opportunities to support movement of people and goods. The Investment Design Document (IDD) states that a “*major obstacle to economic growth [in South Asia] is a substantial infrastructure gap*”,<sup>4</sup> which would require an average of \$400 billion per year to bring infrastructure in the region to a level that would support sustainable growth and climate resilience. Intra-regional connectivity has been a priority for South Asia for at least ten years, however “*there is a history of mutual mistrust rooted in historical conflict and size asymmetries across economies, which prevents South Asian countries from reaping the full economic benefits of geographical proximity and complementary resource endowments*”<sup>5</sup>, and national-level incentives had favoured planning and infrastructure investments at the domestic rather than regional level. South Asia continues to be stymied by limited regional connectivity, constraining economic development and poverty reduction across the region, and as such projects like SARIC remain highly relevant: “*South Asia remains one of least economically integrated regions in the world, with regional trade accounting for only 5% of the region’s trade (the corresponding figures are 50% for East Asia and the Pacific and 22% for Sub-Saharan Africa)*.”<sup>6</sup> **SARIC, in working with government and private sector counterparts to select projects that have a regional connectivity lens, seeks to support country partners to continue to shift the perspective towards that regional approach.**

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<sup>4</sup> SARIC Design Document, p. 2

<sup>5</sup> World Bank (2018), in SARIC M&E Framework Document p3.

<sup>6</sup> SARIC Design Document, p. 2



The SARIC program highlights the role of the private sector in generating the investment and momentum required to see transformative change, and this is another example of the project remaining relevant in the region. Australia has experience supporting the World Bank through trust fund mechanisms to engage with private sector actors in efforts to plan and implement national infrastructure (the Infrastructure for Growth Program - IFG), to facilitate cross border trade between India and its eastern neighbours (the South Asia Regional Trade Facilitation Program [SARTF]<sup>7</sup>), and to mobilise private investment in energy across the region (Sustainable Development Investment Partnership). This experience, plus a raft of literature and work in the region, provided the evidence to support the importance of the private sector in financing and delivering on large scale infrastructure provision in South Asia. Despite successes and inroads, private sector engagement has remained persistently stymied by obstacles such as political will, public and private sector skills and capacity, and policy and regulatory frameworks, to substantively deliver large scale infrastructure.

Amongst this complex set of challenges, SARIC was designed in collaboration with the World Bank and IFC (largely on the back of existing and previous trust fund projects, particularly IFG) and its aims remain relevant in addressing some of the crucial barriers to infrastructure provision and connectivity in the region: low levels of investment in transport and energy connectivity contributing to South Asia's poor record on regional trade and economic integration; high costs of cross-border trade, technical barriers to cross-border trade, and the need to improve and increase the stock of economic infrastructure to support regional connectivity.

### *2.1.2 EQ1a: Does the program respond to the needs of the beneficiaries?*

**The review found that the SARIC program is relevant to the needs of its intended beneficiaries.** In its design, the SARIC program defined the set of eligible countries, selected for their potential role in progressing regional connectivity. The term 'beneficiaries' has been defined for the SARIC program as the direct recipients of SARIC support as part of Components 1, 2 and 3, and are therefore the government and private sector actors in the transport and energy infrastructure space in South Asia. Longer term beneficiaries, such as communities, nations, environment and institutions, are not the focus of this question.

The regional and country policy context proves fertile ground for SARIC to engage. For example, the Government of **Bangladesh** (GoB) is in the process of lifting itself to Upper Middle-Income status by 2031, via a number of ambitious objectives around power, transport and regional connectivity. The GoB 8th Five Year Plan<sup>8</sup> identifies the need for transformation in its transport infrastructure and the crucial role of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) efforts in doing so. Energy security, trade links and other regional integration areas are identified as priorities in the country. **Bhutan** is seeking investment in strengthening institutional capacity particularly in attracting foreign direct investment, and identifies trade, transit and energy cooperation as key priorities in its 12th Five Year Plan.<sup>9</sup> See Figure 1 for a snapshot of SARIC responding to GoBh and its priorities. **Nepal** is seeking to graduate to middle income country status by 2030, identifying regional connectivity as crucial to this plan, and hydropower as one of the drivers of transformation, particularly via engagement with the private sector. Given the **Maldives'** reliance on tourism, the country is prioritising infrastructure development through private investment. Finally, **Sri Lanka** faces significant political turmoil, with real impacts on growth and poverty. Its priorities remain in infrastructure development, and there is a need for innovative financing solutions to reduce the investment risk presented by the current economic volatility.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/south-asia-regional-integration/brief/south-asia-regional-trade-facilitation-program>

<sup>8</sup> <https://policy.asiapacificenergy.org/sites/default/files/Eighth%20Five%20Year%20Plan%20%28EN%29.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <http://tsirang.gov.bt/embedded-files/12-five-year-plan-documents>



The designation of “eligible” countries ensures that the project is not proscriptive, and the selected delivery mechanisms allow for ample flexibility in responding to the needs of the recipients of support. In particular, the trust fund model of delivery means that SARIC builds on decades-long relationships between the World Bank and government actors, and IFC and private sector actors, such that the implementing partners have built trusted relationships, and they understand the policy and economic context, the priorities of the recipients and their needs (technical and processes). This level of trust ensures that the support provided by SARIC is targeted, and in many cases opportunistic, feeding into much longer running processes of collaboration and planning, where an injection of funding for strategic or technical support is needed to progress broader objectives.

#### **Just in time support for Bhutan**

The MTR found that the Bhutan hydropower sector is undergoing a challenging time, due to an increase in domestic demand on account of growth in new industries. In winter, the country faces a shortage of power and resorts to importing energy from India at a much higher rate than the rate it sells its surplus energy in the summer months. The SHDP was reported by government stakeholders to be timely, and a priority project for Bhutan to ensure energy security and have some level of storage to generate power during peak hours. Further, the size of the SHDP project also matters since the hydro construction in the last 10 years has been slowing down, “therefore this is a very timely project, a priority” (Bhutan Government Official).

The review heard, as further evidence to support the recipient-led nature of SARIC, the idea that selecting project proposals to primarily meet SARIC country-coverage criteria would be unwise, and while this may lead to a lack of support to some of the eligible countries, the demand needs to come from partner country government or private sector entities in order for the project to have sufficient ownership in country.

*Figure 1: Just in Time Support for Bhutan: a snapshot of SARIC and its relevance to the country context.*

#### **2.1.3 EQ1b: To what extent has the project remained relevant to the priorities of DFAT, the World Bank and IFC?**

**The program remains highly relevant to the priorities of DFAT, World Bank and IFC.**

**Australia** is committed to supporting economic recovery in the South Asia region, as noted in the new International Development Policy (2023), which prioritises the Indo-Pacific as the main focus of its aid program (including South Asia), and South Asia is taking a more prominent role in the region. SARIC builds on recent program successes as part of the SARTF Program, a World Bank Trust Fund that addresses market access and issues across the region through gender-sensitive trade facilitation and infrastructure connectivity investments. The sectors that SARIC engages in are directly relevant to Australia’s new International Development policy, as it commits to “support partners [to] build resilient cities and infrastructure”,<sup>10</sup> and infrastructure continues to be a core priority of Australia’s development program, which includes support to country partners with expanding financing options including from the private sector. Further, the new International Development policy supports locally led change, and SARIC partners’ country strategies demonstrate alignment with the priorities of each country in which SARIC works (and the South Asia region). The new International Development policy also indicates the importance of drawing on Australia’s strengths for effective development programming. SARIC’s TNS activities, particularly the Australia-based training programs, allows Australian expertise to be shared and relationships to be built between Australian and regional

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/international-development-policy.pdf> page 23



stakeholders. This further demonstrates the relevance of SARIC to Australia’s approach to development.

**The World Bank’s** regional strategy in South Asia seeks to build economic resilience, and respond to the impacts of COVID-19, across all SARIC-eligible countries plus Afghanistan. It recognises that South-Asia is one of the least integrated regions in the world in terms of trade and people-to-people contact, seeks to put aside traditional concerns and political agendas, to take joint action that can develop cross-border solutions to shared issues, strengthen regional institutions, improve infrastructure and connectivity, and advance trade policy.

**The IFC’s** focus in South Asia is to help boost sustainable economic growth in the region through supporting infrastructure building, improvements to logistics, expanding renewable energy use and facilitating public-private partnerships. It promotes inclusive growth in South Asia by improving infrastructure and financial services across India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives, and seeks to encourage regional integration.

**2.1.4 EQ2: *Is the strategy adopted and inputs/outputs identified, realistic, appropriate, and adequate for achievement of the results? (i.e. is the TOC still relevant and causal pathways justifiable?)***

**The strategy adopted to deliver against its objectives is sound.** SARIC aims to develop a project pipeline of quality connectivity investments in energy and transport infrastructure that foster private sector engagement and that individuals and institutions connected to SARIC contribute to cross-border exchange and facilitation of connectivity projects. The overarching strategy chosen to achieve this is to provide demand-led support to government and private sector actors in the SA region through a combination of technical assistance, tailored training, and networking opportunities. The designated entry point for SARIC is in supporting the relevant actors (government, private sector and to some extent the NGO sector) with the tools, processes and technical assistance required to develop relevant policy and regional negotiations and, more practically, to identify, procure and manage relevant projects with the private sector: from private investment to procurement of construction and maintenance services. To engender substantive and sustainable change in infrastructure development, evidence from the literature suggests that building capacity and systems within government and private sector to engage effectively is crucial. The SARIC program builds on the successes of the SARTFP and IFG programs, which, according to the SARIC design document, effectively addressed policy, investment and capacity constraints to infrastructure development and brought new knowledge and solutions to tap South Asia’s growth potential. The IFG program tested the theory of change and found that providing technical analysis, knowledge and advisory support to infrastructure investment can help improve the quality of policies and programs and address persistent infrastructure challenges, which is broadly aligned with the SARIC theory of change.

**The selection of energy and transport sectors to promote and foster regional connectivity is sound.** According to the SARIC framework document, investment in transport and energy is anticipated to have a significant role in lowering the cost of business, increasing productivity, and reducing dependence on imports of hydrocarbons and, therefore, balance of payments stresses. Supporting this, the World Bank study finding of an investment gap of \$400 billion to 2030 noted above indicated that this investment is primarily needed in the energy and transport sectors to enable sustainable growth. Given the local appetite the large investment gap, and numerous opportunities in the region for support to these sectors, the relevance is sound, and it is not recommended to incorporate additional sectors to the SARIC program. The digital payments sector was raised by several SARIC decision-makers as a potential area for inclusion, and while it is not recommended to incorporate additional sectors, it is worth noting that this is an area already being reviewed with interest in the Bangladesh Logistics Development project (World Bank/IFC). According to one key informant, “South



Asia is the least connected region [in the world], with limited trade and difficulty to travel. To the extent we can improve connectivity, it is good for trade and logistics.”

**SARIC's delivery approach and partnerships are realistic, appropriate, and adequate for achieving its ambitious end of project objectives and broader impacts in the region.** The trust fund model of delivery selected for components 1 and 2 allows SARIC to leverage existing relationships, and this was found to be a crucial factor in ensuring the deep engagement and collaboration needed to effect meaningful change across the region.

- The SARIC framework document notes that “The [trust fund] mechanism allows us to mobilise the existing relationships and expertise of the IFC and the Bank in areas where they are already committed, and which are central to their mandate... [using a] tested formula that has worked well in the Asian context” (p11).
- Multiple recipient sources across the region commented on their involvement in SARIC being part of **wider, longstanding, trusted partnerships with the World Bank and IFC in the infrastructure sector**, for example, one recipient of SARIC support noted that “IFC has been with us since 2009... [and we value] their global best practice, skilling our officials and global resources”. Another noted that “IFC has been supporting us from the beginning, since 2012”.

**The MTR found that the more traditional DFAT ODA delivery model (e.g., via a managing contractor) of components 1 and 2 is unlikely to have enabled the same level of access nor depth of engagement with recipient actors** from the outset of project commencement. The ability for the trust fund partners to “hit the ground running” is a crucial factor in the appropriateness of the delivery approach selected. Supporting this, the SARIC framework document states that “for components 1 and 2, employing a managing contractor would have given DFAT a greater voice in the choice of investments and a better-defined Australian profile. However, international financial institutions have a wide set of established relationships with regional and bilateral organisations that could be efficiently and effectively leveraged. Partnering with international financial institutions is consistent with the current architecture for support to infrastructure development in the region accepted by most OECD donors. Partnerships using a trust fund mechanism are relatively easy to set up and manage and have proven results” (p18).

**The approach to delivering the Training and Networking Services (TNS) component (Component 3) has also been found to be appropriate and realistic in achieving the objectives of the SARIC program.** This component is delivered by the managing contractor (Palladium) through a traditional contracted services approach, given that it involves the delivery of specific services: tailored training courses, networking and alumni support, and knowledge products. Importantly, the theory of change ensures that this component cuts across components 1 and 2, and by contracting a service provider with the right skills and experience (for example, delivery of the DFAT Australia Awards program) to engage across partners, participants, training providers and other stakeholders has been found to be an appropriate delivery strategy.

## 2.2 Coherence

### 2.2.1 EQ3: To what extent has the project aligned with other infrastructure initiatives in the region?

**SARIC is well aligned with other infrastructure initiatives in the region.** For example, the South Asia Regional Trade Facilitation Partnership (SARTF) is being implemented concurrently with SARIC, both under the Partnership for South Asia between Australia and the World Bank. SARIC was noted to be an integral part of the World Bank’s long-term efforts to foster regional connectivity in South Asia, such that it currently informs USD 8 billion of World Bank Programs. SARIC sits within the World Bank South Asia Regional Integration, Cooperation and Engagement (SA RICE) program which supports regional integration via a number of trust fund initiatives.



More widely, USAID South Asia Regional Energy Partnership (SAREP) is in operation and aims to advance regional energy integration in South Asia, covering eight countries of the region: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. While focusing on energy integration, the outcomes are well aligned with SARIC.

The UK FCDO is delivering a South Asia regional program entitled the Resilient Asia Program (RAP), under the Climate Action for a Resilient Asia initiative, which funds the World Bank and operates within the RICE umbrella trust fund. The objectives of the RAP, while focusing on climate resilience, touch on SARIC in terms of regional integration and connectivity, green power and transitioning other sectors towards climate resilience (such as transport).

### *2.2.2 EQ4: To what extent has the project promoted a joint response and better engagement between partners (DFAT, IFC and World Bank), and between partner governments?*

**The SARIC program presents many opportunities for the partners to work together and effectively. The TNS component provides a clear example as to how the partnership operates jointly.** Through engaging in developing training and networking plans, contents and participant nominations, Palladium works closely with IFC and World Bank at the Working Group level, as well as with TTLs to ensure that the right stakeholders are involved at the right stage. This relationship building was reported to take some time to generate early on, and the MTR team heard evidence of positive relationships and engagement between the Palladium and trust fund teams.

The Working Group itself also lends itself to promoting a joint response of partners, providing an opportunity to share activities, opportunities and challenges with the program teams. This is an area that could be strengthened, in terms of identifying opportunities for partners (particularly DFAT Post) to support where challenges arise.

Further, the MTR process reinforced the value of joint monitoring visits as a complement to existing monitoring and reporting processes, and an opportunity to gather additional qualitative data, case studies and impact stories at the specific project level.

A number of activities within SARIC present opportunities for governments to work together, again with a focus on the TNS component. Examples include multi-country training cohorts and study tours, which promote networking and engagement of government and private sector actors to solve connectivity challenges.

### *2.2.3 EQ 4a: To what extent is there a shared understanding/alignment on GEDSI as cross-cutting issues and how SARIC can best respond to GEDSI gaps and opportunities?*

**There is an implicit gender theory of change running through SARIC.** This is noted in the SARIC Design Document (2020), such that the implicit gender ToR “which hinges on a common understanding of the term “quality” in the end of investment outcomes” (p9), which is inclusive infrastructure that considers the opportunities and constraints facing women, people with disabilities and other vulnerable and marginalised groups. The review found that this implicit ToC means gender is considered as a cross-cutting feature within SARIC and, as such, is understood as implicit within, and mainstreamed throughout, the work of partners. This cross-cutting approach to GEDSI within SARIC leans heavily on partners existing commitments and internal processes to ensure that GEDSI consideration are incorporated into investments and highlighted in TNS activities.

In the absence of a SARIC-specific GEDSI strategy and/or framework to which partners have committed, it is necessary to analyse partner’s internal approaches and commitments to GEDSI. **MTR consultations highlighted a gap in understanding among partners of each other’s internal GEDSI approaches, standards and commitments.** Visibility and understanding of partner approaches is necessary in order to distil the shared and/or common features between partner approaches to GEDSI, the extent to which they align with sector-level best practice (outlined above) and identify any



gaps when it comes to the implementation of these policies and strategies within a SARIC context. Furthermore, as SARIC's focus on developing a pipeline of future projects, means **the program is particularly reliant on partner's (namely WB and IFC) internal approaches to GEDSI within their own project cycles in order to ensure this lens carries through the future project pipeline.**

**Analysis of partner's internal GEDSI commitments and processes clearly demonstrates a shared and common approach to GEDSI at a strategic and policy level between SARIC partners.** This is reinforced through MTR conversations, which highlighted a shared commitment to improving GEDSI approaches in infrastructure. In this section we outline each partner's commitments to, and employment of, GEDSI strategies and frameworks to elucidate this point.

**World Bank and IFC's independent GEDSI processes at a project level are well developed to ensure consideration of GEDSI at the project-planning stage and throughout the future pipeline of projects.** For example, at a strategic level, World Bank and IFC are committed to the World Bank Group Gender Strategy (2016-23). This strategy outlines both a targeted and cross-cutting approach to gender equality through 4 key pillars: (i) human endowment, (ii) more and better jobs, (iii) ownership and control of assets, and (iv) women's voice and agency. Alignment with this Gender Strategy is also outlined as one of the criteria for WB and IFC team when selecting SARIC Trust Fund activities (SARIC 2021). The strategic framework is supported by country and sectoral level instruments., including the South Asia Regional Gender Action Plan (RGAP). The FY16-21 RGAP and subsequent RGAP II 2023-28 reaffirm this strategic level commitment to gender, while ensuring a focus on the region's most critical gender inequalities and regional priorities for closing gaps. Most recently, RGAP II focused on (i) human capital including improving health and participation in education fields such as STEM, (ii) women's economic empowerment through labour force participation and equitable access to economic assets, and (iii) gender-based violence including prevention and responses (World Bank 2022a). Finally, World Bank's Disability Inclusion and Accountability Framework (updated in 2022) offers a roadmap for disability-inclusion at a policy, operational and analytical level, alongside opportunities to build client capacity relating to disability-inclusive development.

**Further, World Bank and IFC projects also consider gender and disability at an environmental and social level through Environmental and Social Framework (ESF) processes at different stages of the project cycle.** Both gender and disability-inclusion are specific requirements of social assessment processes. Relevant provisions under the ESF focus on (i) improving access to services and benefits such as infrastructure, affordable energy, and (ii) action to remove barriers against those who are excluded from the development process (World Bank 2019). This is integrated at different entry points in the project cycle through numerous specific mechanisms, with examples including: (i) initial scoping of project risks and impacts including those relating to GEDSI, (ii) assessment of environmental and social risks and impacts and designing mitigation measures (e.g., through documents such as Feasibility Study Reports, Environmental and Social Impact Assessments and Environmental and Social Management Plans).

**For Palladium, a tailored GEDSI strategy guides their approach to the provision of TNS activities for SARIC and seeks to respond to the need for improved capacity within implementing partners and networking opportunities between professional in the region.** Palladium's approach to gender in SARIC has been specifically tailored through the development of a SARIC TNS GEDSI Strategy 2022-25, which outlines five key objectives for SARIC TNS that include upskilling project staff, government and private sector stakeholders on taking a GEDSI lens in design and implementation of projects; incorporate GEDSI in all training programs; improve training participants' knowledge and skills on the GEDSI dimensions of social safeguards in infrastructure development; and utilising the alumni network as a platform for continuous learning and knowledge sharing including GEDSI themes.





DFAT's approach to GEDSI is underpinned by the 2016 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy. This strategy adopts a twin-track approach to gender by (a) ensuring that gender and women's empowerment is a priority in corporate operations, and (b) integrating gender more effectively into DFAT's work, including a target of 80% of all aid investments showing real progress on gender equality and women's empowerment. This strategy focuses on three priority pillars: (i) enhancing women's voice in decision-making, leadership and peacebuilding, (ii) promoting women's economic empowerment, and (iii) ending violence against women and girls (DFAT 2016). DFAT is committed to its Disability for All 2015-2020 Strategy for Strengthening Disability-inclusive development in Australia's aid program, which mirrors the twin-track approach to gender to ensure disability-inclusion is both mainstreamed within investments, as well as specific targeting of initiatives to benefit people with disabilities. DFAT's recently released International Development Policy reaffirms this growing emphasis on gender equality and disability equity and rights.

The MTR analysis found that commitments to GEDSI have strengthened significantly since the SARIC design process and, indeed, continue to strengthen with both WB and DFAT due to released updated gender strategies in 2024. This growing emphasis on GEDSI, both within partner institutions as well as the infrastructure sector more broadly, may necessitate future investments into the development of a more explicit and deliberate GEDSI thread within ToC and EOPOs for the program. For the remainder of the program, the MTR suggests that partners take opportunities to engage in dialogue on GEDSI, including leveraging existing forums such as the Working Group Meetings for a dedicated GEDSI discussion.

## 2.3 Effectiveness

### 2.3.1 EQ5: To what extent is progress under SARIC on track towards three Intermediate Outcomes and Outputs? Is the level of progress as expected at this point in the program? What results can we show so far?

The SARIC program has progressed the following pipeline of projects and activities in its first three years of its implementation:

- **Component 1** - IFC has commenced 6 projects (1 has closed) in support of private sector engagement and investment in transport and energy infrastructure and regional connectivity in South Asia. Support has primarily been provided to Bangladesh (4 projects) with one project in Sri Lanka and one with a regional focus. 5 of the projects are related to transport and logistics, and to the energy sector.
- **Component 2** – World Bank has commenced five projects in support of government agencies in opening up transport and energy sectors to the private sector, including direct project financing, across the region. Support has gone to Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh and two regional programs. Three projects are related to transport sector support, and two to energy sector support.
- **Component 3** - Palladium has delivered 4 training programs, with 2 additional programs in the procurement phase during the MTR. 5 networking events took place in 2023 (workshops and alumni meet ups), and three episodes of the first podcast series have been released.

A summary list of projects and activities can be found in Annex 7. The initial stages of the program were hindered by COVID-19, however **after a slow start the program was found to be delivering at pace, with a clear pipeline of support to government and private sector actors from the three components, which are likely to deliver results by the end of the program.** Case studies are provided in Annex 8, which present activities from each of the three partners:

- Case Study 1: InfraLEAP temperature controlled logistics in Bangladesh (IFC/WB)
- Case study 2: Bhutan Sustainable Hydropower Development Project in Bhutan (WB)



- Case study 3: Building Blocks for Inclusive Regional Infrastructure training course (Palladium)

An important element of assessing progress towards intended outputs and outcomes is the comparison between actual results and the targets set. More detailed discussion on the M&E framework can be found in answer to EQ6, although it is worth noting in this section that the lack of articulated targets at all levels of the results framework means that the comparison for this review can only be made inferentially, based on evidence drawn from discussion with stakeholders and project documentation. The MTR found that the lack of clearly articulated and mutually agreed qualitative and quantitative targets (end of program and milestones) may be a contributing factor to the **evident mismatch in expectations between the partners as to what should have been achieved by this stage of the program**. See the EQ6 section below for further discussion and recommendations.

Further, the MTR found that the **format of biannual and annual reporting does not lend itself to clearly identifying the specific results associated with each of the statements of change**, and as such the following discussion on progress against intended results is drawn from a range of sources: annual / biannual reports, working group meeting presentations and minutes, and discussion with key informants during the review period. Improvements to the reporting processes are discussed further in section 2.3.3 below, in response to EQ6.

### ***2.3.1.1 Intermediate Outcomes***

#### ***Intermediate Outcome 1: Private sector involvement in new connectivity projects***

While the latest Annual Report stated it was too early in implementation to report on this intermediate outcome, the MTR found some evidence for emerging results in this area. For example, the IFC is seeking to provide transaction advisory support to set up a concession arrangement for the operations and maintenance of the HSIA airport in Dhaka, Bangladesh. This is due to have been signed in October 2023, and would support improved connectivity through private sector engagement. Also in the civil aviation space, IFC is working with the Government of Sri Lanka to support the privatisation of Sri Lanka Airlines, via structuring a competitive bidding process to the private sector for taking over the airline, and operating and maintaining the airline in accordance with international standards.

#### ***Intermediate Outcome 2: Key Government and private sector institutions and individuals demonstrate increased skills, tools and systems and use of knowledge and information to plan and implement quality connectivity projects.***

The World Bank and IFC support to various government agencies in the form of international best practice technical studies were found to have been “very important” to government counterparts, and in some cases, these have led to downstream applications. For example, in the Bangladesh Prime Minister’s Office formation of national-level subcommittees on infrastructure and private investment, studies have been shared to lift standards to international best practice. Examples of progress include:

- **Bangladesh Bay Terminal Project Support (IFC):** The result of analysis and study support contributed to the investment team signing a joint development agreement (JDA) with the developer, which is one part of the Bay terminal project, within which there are terms of reference and an allocation of budget for ESIA studies. This demonstrates that GoB is taking on findings of IFC advisory support and applying that for subsequent studies. SARIC enabled IFC to carry out the ENS analysis early on, which fed into the investment team’s project documentation. The review team heard that this early engagement is often carried out too late in the process, and in this case, it led to a positive outcome.



- **Bhutan Sustainable Hydropower Development Project (World Bank):** the Druk Green Power Corporation has signalled its strong leadership of the activity by establishing a well-qualified project management team and a technical working group to manage the project.

Further, **the TNS component has reported some important gains in the uptake and use of knowledge as a result of training courses.** Palladium has delivered 6 courses including Building Blocks for Inclusive Regional Infrastructure Projects (“BBIRI”), and Dam Safety Training. Overall, the MTR heard that key informants valued SARIC training, such as the exposure to PPP options in infrastructure projects and how they are managed, with one noting that “SARIC training helped me see from a different perspective”.

*Intermediate Outcome 3: A network of government and private sector male and female infrastructure professionals is established and active and linked to Australian counterparts.*

The MTR found that **as a result of the TNS component of SARIC, a burgeoning network of professionals across the government and private sector is developing**, in niche areas such as Dam Safety, as well as more general issues pertaining to infrastructure PPPs. For example, stakeholder consultation found numerous reports of training participants actively utilising networks within their training cohort to continue discussions and share lessons. The review identified at least three highly active WhatsApp messenger groups of training participant cohorts, with participants sharing information, articles, photographs and upcoming relevant events. These include participants from BBIRI, Women in Power Sector, and Dam Safety training. **The MTR heard participants valued the training in setting up networks of alumni**, which have led to numerous face-to-face meetings (for example between Sri Lankan and Nepali participants as part of wider travel) and other contact with government and regulators in the region. Several training recipients noted that while the exposure to Australian infrastructure and technical specialists was valuable, relationships were not built at the time and those connections have largely not been sustained. One exception was found in the case of Sri Lanka/Maldives BBIRI participants, who maintain a fruitful relationship with training organisers and presenters from University of Sunshine Coast. The collaborative benefits of the training were felt by participants to be between the SA regional participants.

#### 2.3.1.2 Outputs

*Output 1: A pipeline of quality infrastructure projects including opportunities for private sector investment is identified and scoped.*

The MTR found that **the process of pipeline project identification and scoping, while inherently part of the work of the World Bank and IFC, is not explicitly described in any of the project documentation.** Evidence collected through discussions with key informants found that the pipeline of quality infrastructure projects is developed largely by the Task Team Leaders and wider regional engagement with country level stakeholders as part of their ongoing work with government agencies and private sector actors across the SARIC-eligible countries. The statement relating to development of project pipelines in the SARIC Operations Manual is: “the World Bank, IFC and DFAT will consult each other on the development of project pipelines to maximise the potential for activities to be selected by the World Bank and IFC, through their respective internal processes, to be mutually reinforcing” (p9). Further, the Operations Manual states that “each delivery partner shall approve activities under their respective components through their respective internal activity admission and approval process.” This statement would benefit from unpacking the following steps:

- *how* project concepts are identified with the government/private sector partner, and what this looks like in practice within the internal IFC/World Bank processes
- *how* decisions are made to advance some projects to further scoping and concept note development, and what happens to the project concepts that are factored out in those early stages.



Discussions with relevant key informants suggest that these **processes are relatively fluid, and form the basis of regular engagement between TTLs with government or private sector counterparts**. This review heard that the World Bank regional decision makers program committee meeting takes place in January-March each year, and that prior to this the World Bank shares with DFAT in advance the list of activities that have been shortlisted for funding under their trust funds for informal discussion and inputs. Those activities are then submitted to the regional integration programs committee (Country Directors for the region), and the results of the committee are tabled in SARIC Donor Steering Committee meetings. The review found that in the reality of implementation, DFAT (along with Palladium and Adam Smith International), have little sight of the project identification process in its early stages. In parallel, the World Bank and IFC do not regularly share, in any pre-determined format, the process or updates on pipeline development with DFAT, given that is not part of the formal or informal reporting process(es).

While it may seem like a trivial finding regarding process, **the evidence suggests that this may be a crucial missing link in the internal communications and reporting processes of the SARIC program**, leading to some dissatisfaction and puzzlement of project partners. This is also leading to differing expectations by partners on the project selection processes, and how and when information should be shared. The review team does not recommend simply adding an extra layer of reporting for the TTL on early project identification (either to the relevant responsible person at World Bank/IFC or directly to DFAT) as this is likely to fall outside of regular internal processes and lead to inefficiencies. Indeed, one of the benefits of the trust fund delivery model is that it enables flexibility and responsiveness in working with government and private sector to identify projects relevant to their priorities. The trade-off of this delivery model is that DFAT may not have access to these early discussions.

It is recommended that the process of early-stage project identification is unpacked by IFC and World Bank partners in discussion with DFAT, Palladium and Adam Smith International as part of presentations of program progress Working Group meetings. Further, it is recommended that an agreement is made between partners about whether and how any additional meaningful consultation with DFAT is to take place relating to early project selection. Examples of results under this output come from program partner presentations of projects in play:

- World Bank: eMOSA project, the ACCESS Analytical Program
- World Bank/IFC joint: Bangladesh Logistics Development / Infraleap
- IFC: Patenga Container Terminal PPP (underway), South Asia Regional Power Trading (Nepal), Dhaka Airport PPP transaction advisory services, and Sri Lankan Air divestiture

#### *Output 2: Options to facilitate private sector investment in quality infrastructure designed*

This output is measured in terms of reports completed, presumably that support the development of options for facilitating private sector investment in infrastructure. Some progress has been made on this front, including the World Bank Nepal Civil Aviation project report on engaging efficiency of airports for Kathmandu, Birtangar and Simikot.

#### *Output 3: Partner government & private sector capacity built to plan, coordinate, and manage quality infrastructure*

The MTR found evidence for a varied portfolio of work by IFC and World Bank in supporting private sector and government capacity. However, there is considerable overlap between the examples below and those provided in outputs 1 and 2, which speaks to the improvements needed in the current reporting system against the results framework. Examples include:



- IFC is providing PPP support to the Public Private Authority of Bangladesh (PPPA) and Chittagong Port Authority in design and negotiation of a private sector concession for the **Bangladesh Patenga Container Terminal**.
- IFC supported the **South Asia Power Summit 2022** in New Delhi, which was organised by India's Ministry of Power, the Confederation of Indian Industry, and India's Ministry of External Affairs.
- Together with two private independent power producers from India and Bangladesh, and the Bangladesh Energy Society, **IFC organized an in-person workshop on "Round-the-Clock Renewable Energy in the Grid"** in May 2022. The workshop focused on knowledge exchange relating to technical solutions, associated costs, and expected benefits in the context of Bangladesh's energy mix. Senior government officials from the generation, transmission, distribution, and renewable energy departments of the GoB attended.
- The World Bank is delivering the **Bhutan Hydro project**, working with power sector agencies in Bhutan to plan and prepare regional hydropower and transmission line projects
- The World Bank is supporting the Bangladesh National Logistics Development and Coordination Committee (NLDCC) to improve the overall logistics sector in Bangladesh, as part of the **Bangladesh Logistics Development** project.

*Output 4: Sustainable approaches or models piloted to enhance quality project level delivery and encourage private sector participation*

The formal reporting provides no evidence of results against this output. This is likely to be a result of under reporting, rather than under-delivery, due to the lack of reporting against results framework outputs and outcomes.

*Output 5: Targeted knowledge products delivered and shared with government and private sector stakeholders*

**World Bank and Palladium are responsible for delivering this output, however only Palladium through the TNS component has reported results.** The MTR found that there would be value in the World Bank team reviewing their work under SARIC, and drawing out examples of targeted knowledge products that have been shared with government, as there are several examples (such as the support to Bangladesh Logistics Development, and the ACCESS Analytical program) to suggest relevant results have been achieved and not reported to date.

Palladium, via the TNS component, successfully delivered two training courses as noted above, and made progress on six separate training and capacity-building exercises, covering nearly 200 infrastructure professionals in SA Region's public and private sectors, according to the biannual report (Apr-Sep 2023). This includes a study tour on PPP in ports, capacity sharing on power /electricity markets, technical and leadership training in energy (exclusively for women engineers), and training on road safety and road asset management.

The MTR heard several recommendations to feed into the training component. For example, the importance of including India in regional events and training was discussed multiple times. However, it was also raised that there may be value in holding discussions without India present as they are the dominant economy in the region. Similarly, the MTR heard that India has a "complicated process for nominating officials", which may be challenging to address. As one respondent noted, the program "must not hold its trainings hostage to India's participation or not". Themes noted for possible focus included: regulatory intervention; sector specific sessions such as road safety audits. The location of training was suggested to include India or in other countries in the region, with some Australian trainers to learn from international expertise. One innovative suggestion was the possible formation of a challenge fund to support regional specialists to solve a regional connectivity problem, which may cultivate longer term relationships between regional professionals. Several respondents noted the



importance of improving diversity of stakeholders beyond government participants, which may help to build better communication mechanisms between stakeholders back in their home countries. Finally, it was noted that ADB is heavily engaged in energy reforms in the region, so it may be wise for SARIC to bring them into the TNS component.

#### *Output 6: Collaborative mechanisms (including networking events and alumni association) delivered.*

Collaborative mechanisms delivered during the first 18 months of delivery by Palladium are noted below:

- On the sidelines of “Power Summit 2023” in Nepal, a meet-up for the Nepal TNS alumni (of the BBIRI training course held in Australia<sup>1</sup>) at the Australian Embassy in Kathmandu.
- A networking event (jointly with Austrade and Australian High Commission, Dhaka), providing an opportunity for Australian companies in the transport sector, SARIC TNS BBIRI alumni, senior representatives from Bangladesh’s government and local private sector to meet, interact, network, and collaborate.
- During the Apr-Sep period, 53 infrastructure professionals in the public and private sectors participated in regional networking events, and they met 19 Australian counterparts from the public and private sectors. Additionally, a networking event was organised during the MTR mission for WePower participants in Nepal, promoting sharing of lessons and experiences as part of their engagement in the LSTP training program.

#### *2.3.3 EQ6: Does the M&E framework support implementation and effectively track progress/results? Is it appropriate to all partners?*

**Overall, the M&E Framework as outlined in the Operations Manual provides a solid foundation for SARIC**, developed in collaboration by its partners, in that it sets out the project objectives and causal pathways (theory of change), a framework for measurement and reporting (results framework), and the roles and responsibilities of partners in implementing M&E activities. The review team heard that the design of the M&E framework was the result of a lengthy collaborative process between partners, and the MTR found that partners are delivering according to these agreements. In addition, Palladium has developed its own TNS-related M&E Plan, which unpacks the indicators against which Palladium is required to report, and provides indicator definitions, measurement and methodology details, risk monitoring and quality assurance processes. The TNS M&E Plan is a substantially more thorough document than the M&E section of the Operations Manual by which IFC and World Bank are guided.

The following is a critique on the extent to which the M&E framework supports implementation and effectively tracks progress/results.

**a) The results framework is missing targets at all levels.** The review heard that the flexible, adaptive and recipient-led nature of the SARIC program makes it challenging to set hard and fast targets, however it is highly recommended that this element of the results framework is revisited by the M&E Coordinator with input from project partners, as part of a collaborative process. This would provide a focal point for discussion relating to “what success looks like” amongst partners. It is an optimal time to define targets, given the partners will have a clearer understanding of what is realistic and achievable in the time remaining, as compared with the commencement of the project.

**b) The Output statement of change is not defined**, in contrast to the definitions provided for the Intermediate Outcomes in the Operations Manual. For example, it is not clear what form the “pipeline of quality infrastructure projects” is to take, nor is the criteria of “quality infrastructure projects” defined in clear terms. The MTR found that in line with best practice, definitions of outputs and outcomes statements would add value in improving the effectiveness of the results framework in ensuring that all results are being appropriately captured.



c) **The M&E framework does not clearly articulate how each of the results framework indicators relate to the statement of change**, which would help all partners to best provide examples of results and ensure that results are being effectively reported. For example, the review found that “number of reports completed” is too generic, and does not provide the necessary link as to how this measures the related output statement “options to facilitate private sector investment in quality infrastructure designed”. The MTR found that in line with best practice, a narrative to accompany the results framework would enable such links to be made and add value to the overarching program logic.

d) **The Results Framework indicators are primarily quantitative**, which misses an opportunity for valuable results to be reported against the statements of change. For example, “number of entities implementing recommended changes” could be reworded as “number and type of entities implementing recommended changes (including examples as evidence)”, which would enable comparison against previous reporting, with the added benefit of reporting particular examples of change. The MTR found that the M&E Coordinator is working closely with partners to generate biannual and annual results reporting, and in doing so it is suggested that time is built into this process to draw out associated qualitative information either from partner M&E Coordinators or relevant TTLs.

e) **The Results Framework does not provide details relating to data sources or measurement methods**, which leaves a gap in guidance as to how the data is expected to be sourced and in what form the result is to be provided. For example, it is not clear how indicator 2.2.4 “Partner Priorities identified and supported for enhancing regional transport connectivity” is to be measured or reported against. Another example is indicator 2.2.8 “Gender analysis is routinely and effectively used in planning infrastructure projects”, which does not specify which institutions or individuals are included in the scope of the indicator, nor how it is to be reported against. This level of detail would bring added clarity and value to the results framework.

f) **There is an imbalance in the number of indicators across intermediate outcomes, and between Intermediate Outcomes and Outputs**, which impacts on the amount of measurement and reporting accordingly. Figure 2 below lays out the extent of measurement for each Intermediate Outcome statement and the related Outputs, to elucidate this finding.

Outcome Statement	# of Indicators	Related outputs	# of output Indicators
2.1: Private sector involvement in new connectivity projects	2	3.1 3.2	1 1 Total: 2
2.2: Key Government and private sector institutions and individuals demonstrate increased skills, tools and systems and use of knowledge and information to plan and implement quality connectivity projects.	9	3.3 3.4 3.5	3 1 1 Total: 5
2.3 A network of government and private sector male and female infrastructure professionals is established and active and linked to Australian counterparts.	4	3.6	5 Total: 5
<b>Overall indicator totals:</b>	15		12

Figure 2: Indicators and outputs relating to each Outcome Statement

The weighting towards measuring Intermediate Outcome 2.2 reflects the significance of capacity building and technical assistance to government and private sector actors in driving change, however the use of 9 indicators to measure one intermediate outcome seems to the MTR team based on their expertise to be excessive. There may be scope to reduce the indicators through simple rewording or combining indicators to allow for smoother measurement and reporting. It is recommended that the



DFAT Investment Manager considers the proposed changes, in consultation with partners, outlined in Annex 6.

**g) The MTR found that the Annual Report in its current format does not provide an easily digestible account of achievements in the reporting period (or cumulatively) against the SARIC objectives,** and this is detrimental to the value of the product to partners and decision makers relying on evidence of progress and achievement. For instance, the Annual Report presents project progress and results by partner, which is later summarised in the results framework against relevant outputs and outcomes for that reporting period. Ideally the report would provide an introductory summary of each partner's activity, followed by an account of progress and results against outcomes and outputs (using the indicators as the measure) for the reporting period. Further, the results framework provides information for the reporting period, however this would ideally include cumulative totals also, so that the most recent Annual Report presents a complete and up-to-date picture of overall results. As a result, the MTR found that the current reporting format does not lend itself to easily identifying which projects and achievements contribute to which output or outcome, nor where the project stands in terms of its overall achievements to date. It is recommended that the reporting template be revised by the M&E Coordinator, in consultation with the M&E team, to present achievements according to output and outcome results statements and indicators, and that one whole-project report template is developed and shared with partners, with guidance as to which partner is responsible for contributing to each section.

**h) The existing TNS M&E is heavily focused on capturing changes in individual knowledge through pre and post training surveys.** While this information yields valuable insights, challenges remain when it comes to capturing longer-term institutional change impacts of this learning. The MTR process highlighted the value in joint-monitoring visits as an opportunity for SARIC partners to follow up with TNS alumni and assess ways in which they've been applying this knowledge within their institutions. So as to enrich the regular reporting and surveys, the M&E coordinator, and/or partner's M&E counterparts, may consider attending these sessions and related alumni networking events that may be organised to coincide with these visits, in order to collect qualitative examples and case studies.

### ***2.3.5 EQ7: To what extent has the broader contextual environment influenced and contributed towards the "forecast" achievement (or non-achievement) of EoIOs?***

**The MTR found that the broader contextual environment, including the political, social and climate landscape, overall supports and contributes positively towards the forecast achievement of EoIOs.** Beyond the findings outlined in section 2.1 regarding the SARIC program's relevance to the region, the government and private sector actors, and the project partners, feedback and reflection from key informant sources provided many examples of implementation in an enabling context, as noted below.

With regards to the forecast achievement of SARIC's EoIOs, **the relevant assumption as articulated in the theory of change is that the political and security environment allows cross border collaboration.** Evidence to support this assumption includes:

- The Government of Bangladesh is keen to move forward on infrastructure and regional connectivity projects as part of its push to graduate from LDC to MIC and beyond, and there is political value relating to leadership of particular infrastructure projects. This traditionally presents a risk to project sustainability, however bipartisan support for the private sector and PPP approach means that even with changes in government, the private sector agenda can take comfort that their work will continue.
- Cross-border collaboration may be challenging between India and Pakistan, due to longstanding tensions, however bringing together non-conventional partners on non-controversial issues is welcomed.





- The Government of Bhutan continues to see its hydropower generation as a crucial step in looking beyond domestic demand and engaging with India and Bangladesh markets.
- Bangladesh's National Industrial Policy 2022 formally recognised and legitimised logistics as a priority industry for government, further supporting SARIC connectivity objectives.

Areas where the **context may hinder the project's influence towards the EoIOs** related to wider geopolitical crises, domestic regulatory barriers, and the negative economic outlook in the region:

- The political crisis in Sri Lanka, which is affecting bankability of private and public sector led projects. Avenues to address this risk raised by informants include the potential for 'blended finance' and other ways to de-risk investment in the financially volatile context. Connectivity may still be achieved, however the extent to which all countries benefit may be affected by political and economic crises.
- The barrier of India's federal restrictions on buying Nepali hydropower, as imported hydro power is not counted as 'green power' under India's policy framework and under global mitigation targets and initiatives. While India is set up to trade hydropower between states, there remain barriers and disincentives for cross-border trade, which may hamper SARIC's objectives. This feeds into some of the risks identified in the most recent SARIC Bi-Annual Progress Report (Apr-Sep 2023), which highlights the lack of regulatory alignment across countries as a moderate risk, and engagement with counterpart governments as the mitigation strategy.
- The poor economic outlook was raised in reporting and stakeholder consultation as a potential contextual barrier to achievement of the SARIC objectives, with the mitigation strategy being to engage with counterpart governments to help plan and prioritise infrastructure investments.

Given engagement with counterpart governments is cited as the main strategy to mitigate contextual risks, it is recommended that partners provide additional information to the Working Group meetings on progress of engagement with governments and discuss possible inroads for engagement with regulators and wider government actors, which DFAT (via Post and other lines of communication) may be able to support this work. The MTR finds that **the positive and enduring relationships of IFC and World Bank partners with government stakeholders stands the partners in good stead navigate these complex challenges with strong and contextually relevant expertise.**

### *2.3.6 EQ8: To what extent are SARIC's partnership, governance and program management mechanisms and arrangements effective? Is the current model appropriate and does it generate coherence and learning?*

**The Operations Manual is the guiding document that articulates the partnership, governance and program management mechanisms and arrangements**, a document developed collaboratively between DFAT, IFC and World Bank to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly articulated and agreed upon. The MTR heard that while this was somewhat time consuming for partners, it was a valuable process that built ownership of the document as well as for the partnerships required to deliver the program objectives.

SARIC is managed via several tiers of governance. The Donor Steering Committee, with policy setting stakeholders from DFAT, IFC and World Bank, which undertakes strategic oversight of the program. Meetings take place once a year to review progress, resolve concerns and table decisions on trust fund activities. **The MTR found that this is a useful high-level governance body, and it delivers on its objectives.**

The Working Group consists of operational level representatives from DFAT, IFC, World Bank, and Palladium, plus representatives from relevant DFAT regional posts, IFC and World Bank country



teams, and the Adam Smith International M&E Coordinator. The Working Group meets via videoconference quarterly, and during those meetings it serves as an informal program management team, which tracks program progress, ensures coordination and alignment of partner activities. The Working Group, as agreed in the Operations Manual, is expected to: Discuss and endorse training methodologies proposed by Palladium; Check the continuing validity of the program logic; Assess financial progress; Manage the Mid Term and end of program evaluations; and Act as a forum for an annual internal or externally commissioned partnership health check.

The agenda for the Working Group meetings has evolved over the course of the program, and while the MTR found that **the Working Group meetings provide a valuable opportunity for partners to come together and share progress and lessons between reporting cycles, there are areas of the originally agreed objectives that are not currently being addressed**. For example, the most recent agendas for the Working Group meetings did not include discussion items relating to the validity of the program logic, assessment of financial progress, or endorsement of training courses. There have been additions to the agenda, such as the issue of risk management and mitigation, which was raised by DFAT in late 2022/early 2023 as an area that the Working Group is well placed to track, so this is now included as a standing part of partner presentations. The MTR team witnessed the value the program team places in the knowledge and expertise of the TTLs, however the Working Group meetings to date have not drawn this in effectively. It is recommended that the Working Group, under the guidance of the M&E Coordinator in their role of promoting internal learning, plans to incorporate a theme for every second Working Group meeting, such as GEDSI, and that specific TTLs are invited to contribute their experience and lessons to the theme.

**Finally, the format of presentations by IFC and World Bank that update on energy and transport project provides a richness and tangible quality to the work that these partners are doing, however they do not provide enough detail as to how they relate to the Outcome and Output level result statements of the program**. For example, it is not clear in partner presentations how each partner is contributing to “targeted knowledge products developed and shared with government and private sector” (World Bank), “piloting of sustainable approaches or models to enhance quality project level delivery and encourage private sector participation” (World Bank/IFC), or “development of a pipeline of quality infrastructure projects” (World Bank/IFC). What is missing from these partner updates is the qualitative substance of progress against outputs and intermediate outcomes and how these contribute to the tangible projects that are presented by IFC and World Bank.

**Assessment of the role of the Working Group against the information needs of partners has found that the program would benefit from more regular discussion on the validity of the program logic, financial progress, and a partnership health check (original objectives), and that the discussion on risk and opportunities remains relevant**. Discussion and endorsement of training course methodologies appears to be less relevant in this forum, given the regular engagement between Palladium and the IFC and World Bank outside of Working Group Meetings on training program development, and as such the current approach of presentation of progress and activities by Palladium is suitable, ideally with an added discussion of risks and opportunities. It is recommended that the DFAT, as Chair, revises the Working Group Meeting agenda to bring it in line with the discussion in this section. This would also align the working group discussions with recommendations made above on the proposed approach to reporting, and would feed into a better understanding across the partnership of how each partner is delivering against overall objectives. A suggested agenda is presented in Annex 5.

**The MTR team found the SARIC program management strategy to be relatively unique in that program leadership, coordination and management of trust fund partners and managing contractors is carried out by the DFAT Investment Manager**, rather than a more traditional arrangement where a contracted team leader would be responsible supervision of an implementation team. The MTR found that **the role of leadership of the program’s engagement with IFC/World Bank under trust fund**



agreements is best suited to sit within DFAT itself, rather than an independent Program Manager, as the program relationships are held between senior representatives of each of the agencies under trust fund agreements, rather than standard service delivery contracts. Further, the trust fund model transfers significant responsibility and power over the expenditure of the funds to the program partners, carried out following their internal delivery and accountability mechanisms following mutually agreed criteria, and an additional layer of program management is like to be inefficient at best, and an impediment to delivery at worst.

### *2.3.7 EQ8b: Does it promote and demonstrate Australia's value add to the region?*

The MTR found that to some extent, SARIC demonstrates Australia's value add to the region. The challenge for SARIC is in its visibility and branding, given the majority of its funding being channelled through trust funds and many government counterparts, with longstanding relationships with the IFC and World Bank, do not see the support as originating from Australia's ODA spend, despite some effort by the program partners to communicate this message where appropriate. The MTR found that the TNS component is the clearest avenue to promote Australia's value add to the region, particularly through study tours and training courses delivered out of Australia, through Australian training partners (Entura, USC). The MTR heard that program stakeholders see that Australia holds expertise in many of project themes, such as logistics and connectivity, and amongst South Asian government there is a lot of interest learning from industry experts. Similarly, in terms of the projects funded under SARIC, the MTR heard that "A number of things we've done would have been difficult to do without DFAT. We would have found the money, but it would have taken lot more time and it would have taken us a lot longer to do it".

Further evidence of Australia's value add was that in some countries in the region, such as Nepal, Australia is a relatively neutral donor and as such has the potential to provide non-partisan support in politically sensitive areas of infrastructure. The converse of this point, however, was that in places where Australia does not hold bilateral aid agreements, such as India, the MTR team heard there may be limited value and potential risk in raising the visibility of Australia's support to SARIC in engaging with government counterparts.

### *2.3.8 EQ9: Are there opportunities or innovative ways of working for the remainder of SARIC?*

The MTR found that given the momentum that SARIC has generated over the last year, there is a clear steer and plans in place for activities that will run to the end of the program. For example, IFC and World Bank both note that their funding is considered allocated on projects (some yet to be committed), and as such there would be little value in adjusting the ways of working for the remaining period of SARIC. Adjustments to the M&E framework and implementation approach are proposed in section 2.3.6, and beyond these the MTR team would not recommend alternative ways of working.

### *2.3.9 EQ10: What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the program implementation process? To what extent are gender safeguards risks (such as PSEAH) being addressed through program implementation/partner training support? What risks, if any, of this nature have been identified?*

**The MTR found that the overall strengths of the program are derived from the selected implementation model and selection of partners.** For example, the trust fund model allows SARIC to build on the World Bank and IFC's existing trusted relationships with government and private sector counterparts, based on decades' long engagement and fruitful support. Further, the contracted service provision model provides DFAT with influence over visibility as Australian ODA with key government and private sector actors (via Palladium's delivery of TNS), and promotes evidence gathering and sharing of lessons (via Adam Smith International's M&E Coordinator role). SARIC benefits from the engagement that Palladium has with World Bank and IFC in development of TNS content and participant lists, which provides a cross-cutting element of joint working to the program.



Further evidence of the model's strength is that SARIC partners deliver their areas of work largely independently, while operating as a cohesive team when partnership engagement is required, such as for Working Group meetings and in engaging on TNS and M&E matters.

**A further strength of the program uncovered by the MTR is the way in which the TNS component has demonstrated leveraging and extending the reach of existing partner activities in pursuit of regional connectivity.** Examples include the adaptation of World Bank's "WePower" Training into the SARIC Large Systems Training Program (LSTP), and the planned Gender Mainstreaming in Land Ports training, which intends to draw out existing World Bank learning and knowledge products from investments in gender mainstreaming with India's Land Ports Authority, for the benefit of land ports counterparts in Bangladesh.

**Opportunities exist in the implementation process to improve the Working Group Meetings as noted in this section, and in improving the M&E Framework** as discussed earlier. **Further alumni engagement opportunities are apparent**, and the MTR heard of emerging plans to coordinate SARIC networking and alumni engagement with the Australia Awards alumni processes, also run by Palladium. With regards to the implementation of GEDSI approaches, opportunities exist within SARIC's current operating context to strengthen information flows on this issue. For example, leveraging Working Group meetings for specific GEDSI thematic discussions, as well as allocating time in Working Group meetings for detailed individual project updates, including inputs from consultants and TTLs on more specific details of some of the preparatory instruments.

**Weaknesses of the program's implementation process relate to the type and forms of information flows around progress and expenditure**, which is discussed in the Effectiveness section. SARIC, as a partnership model that feeds into much larger initiatives, is challenged with the question of attribution, and this may be perceived as a weakness to DFAT in terms of its strategic value in the region. The Impact section seeks to narrate the wider transformational change to which SARIC is contributing, and there is an opportunity for the M&E Coordinator to build on this to develop case studies and further narrative and evidence to tell that story.

**The MTR found that threats to the program's implementation sit with the operating environment and political context**, as many of the assumptions depend on external factors. For example, the risk matrix provided in the latest program Annual Report (2022) notes several moderately likely risks with high impact that are externally driven, including:

- Ability of regional governments to finance new infrastructure activities considering the impacts of global inflation and additional pressures on respective economies
- Potential inequality in economic growth and exports as countries emerge from CoVID-19 and domestic economic situations at varying rates and stages.
- Diminished political buy-in from governmental stakeholders
- Lack of regulatory alignment across countries may lead to delay in pursuing integration. National interests may take precedence over regional goals
- Lack of interest to participate in training activities (including the risk that the private sector may be hesitant to engage)

**The MTR found the proposed mitigation strategies to be largely adequate in terms of the level of local/stakeholder knowledge and engagement that IFC and World Bank possess.** However, the mitigation measures to threats relating to economic growth inequality and government financing ability extend to threat monitoring only, and given their moderate likelihood of occurring, the MTR found that the program would benefit from World Bank and IFC partners providing additional plans to bolster risk monitoring activities. The horizon scanning carried out by the M&E Coordinator may provide a conduit for building on risk mitigation plans, and engagement with DFAT on identifying political and/or diplomatic inroads to support the enabling environment would also be beneficial.



### *2.3.10 EQ11: To what extent does SARIC address climate change concerns? How can the activities consider climate change to a greater extent?*

The MTR finds that the SARIC program lends itself well to supporting climate resilience in its focus on **energy and transport infrastructure for economic connectivity in the region**, and in working with expert program partners with high standards of climate smart and environmental safeguarding procedures. Climate change is a significant risk to the South Asia region, as it “remains highly prone to cyclones, extreme monsoon rainfall variability, floods, and extreme heat from rising temperatures” (World Bank, 2022). Transport (roads, ports etc.) and energy (power generation and transmission) infrastructure are at particular risk of damage from climate related weather events, and these sectors hold significant opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate further impacts on climate change. This puts climate change at the centre of the SARIC theory of change.

Building adaptation and resilience to climate risks into infrastructure is a crucial element in any quality project that expects to deliver sustainable solutions that are fit for purpose. **By working with the World Bank and IFC, SARIC is operating according to progressive analysis methods and solutions that incorporate climate risks, mitigation and adaptation elements as standard practice.** For example, the World Bank Group, which pertains to World Bank and IFC, demonstrated its commitment in 2022 to climate resilience with the introduction of its Climate Change Action Plan, including a commitment to Paris alignment reinforcing a focus on embedding climate action in infrastructure. Out of this came a suite of Climate Toolkits (in hydropower, roads, renewable energy, and an umbrella toolkit) for Infrastructure PPPs, which provide guidance and advice to its implementing teams and government and private sector counterparts to support the incorporation of climate resilience in infrastructure development.<sup>11</sup>

The MTR found that **SARIC is working with governments that are largely supportive of climate resilient infrastructure development, which is an enabling factor in allowing program partners to incorporate climate smart development methods and approaches in their support to government and private sector.** For example, the Government of Nepal is actively transitioning away from fossil fuels to green energy in order to meet the global targets to cut emissions (Nationally Determined Contributions, or NDCs) that Nepal is committed to (by 2045). Further, Bangladesh has committed to reducing carbon emissions from the transport sector, and

**Many of the projects carried out under SARIC are providing direct support to government and private sector that promotes consideration and action on climate.** For example, the Port Environmental and Social Analysis in Bangladesh project delivered by IFC in support of PSA International Pty Ltd included in their studies a Climate Change Resilience Assessment and Shoreline Change Modelling. The South Asia Power Pool project promoted climate resilience to Bangladesh’s Power Secretary and the Bangladesh Power Development Board, focusing on renewable energy for base load supply, energy fuel diversification, and climate change mitigation. The World Bank, in its support to the Sustainable Hydropower Development Project in Bhutan, is preparing a range of reports including a Climate Resilient Assessment Report to feed into project design.

**A key barrier related to government support is in the tension between the benefits of importing green power, and the inability to report carbon emissions reductions on imported energy due to the global emissions reporting protocols.** This is a particular concern in attempts to engage in cross border energy trade with India (from Bhutan and Nepal, for example), and requires further engagement with government parties to navigate. The MTR found that DFAT stands ready to support

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/sustainableinfrastructurefinance/brief/climate-toolkits-for-infrastructure-ppps>



partners through its posts in the region to make inroads on those discussions. This relies on SARIC partners to reach out to DFAT where such opportunities arise.

**Opportunities to increase consideration and action promoting climate resilience raised in discussions with key informants include the potential to share lessons and knowledge across borders**, either in the form of training and networking activities (already mandated in all courses as a cross-cutting theme), by engaging with DFAT post and IFC/World Bank country teams, or through the SARIC podcast series.

## 2.4 Efficiency

### 2.4.1 EQ12: *To what extent is SARIC being delivered efficiently? What factors are facilitating or impacting efficiency? Looking at economy, timeliness, cost effectiveness, value for money*

With regards to expenditure, the MTR found that SARIC delivery partners were slow to spend in the first half of the program and while verbal reporting from both World Bank and IFC has found that both partners have fully allocated the trust fund allocations, only around 32-34% of allocations have been committed (up to September 2023). The slow start is partly due to COVID-19 delays in the early stages of the program, although the review found evidence that the IFC and World Bank spending plans are increasing in pace. Slow expenditure presents some risk to the program as to whether the allocations will be fully committed and spent by the end of the program timeframe.

**The difference in allocation and commitment of funding is important to note, as until activities are approved and contracts with clients and delivery agents are signed, the funds remain “unspent”.** The MTR found that the process between ideation of an activity and commitment of funding by World Bank and IFC teams is an iterative one that involves frequent discussions with government and/or private sector clients, as well as consultation within the World Bank and IFC country and regional teams to assess viability. This process is largely unseen by DFAT (according to the agreed partnership arrangements), such that while activities may be earmarked by IFC and World Bank well in advance of commitments, this upstream work with clients does not make its way into reporting and progress updates. Given the sensitive nature of discussions with government and private sector, full disclosure to the project team may not be possible until commitments are formed. However, it is recommended that IFC and World Bank representatives provide a flavour of these activities as part of Working Group meetings and/or informal engagements with DFAT, to provide assurances that progress is being made “behind the scenes”. The format of this update, whether as additional detail on expenditure plans, or verbal feedback, depends on agreement between program partners, however basic information as to the sector, type of activity and timeline of expenditure is recommended.

Palladium has also reported considerable underspend, however, training plans for 2024 include an ambitious pipeline of training and networking programs such that expenditure is likely to be back on track in the second half of the program.

**One factor driving efficiency is the way in which SARIC utilises the existing World Bank and IFC implementation processes** to engage with government and private sector actors in identifying projects, engage in technical assistance and capacity building, and carry out upstream market development activities. According to project reporting and stakeholder consultation, this process for selection of activities across all four Trust Funds is streamlined under the World Bank’s Trust Fund Reform. All regional grant proposals are collectively reviewed and approved by the Regional Integration Programs Committee (RIPC), that represents activities in South Asia. Proposals are allocated to be financed from respective Trust Funds based on their best strategic fit. According to the Annual Report 2022, “this approach is helping the Bank to manage all its Trust Funds as a portfolio, designed to bring efficiency in operations by ensuring that all activities remain aligned with regional and country priorities, and by maximising synergies between them”.



In terms of the TNS component, one barrier to efficiency is the tension between specific and tailored training and the extent to which programs, once designed, can be rolled out to a variety of stakeholders across the region. The MTR heard that access to a large network of training recipients, and delivery of a widely applicable program, are valuable to training suppliers, which may affect the procurement process. This tension between designing highly niche one-off training programs and the interests of training providers in long term continuity of training delivery, affects the ability of Palladium to attract the highest quality training providers. The MTR did not find evidence of low-performing training providers, instead evidence suggests that Palladium is taking into account in the pipeline of courses the balance between specificity and broader applicability, exemplified by the highly niche Dam Safety training in Hobart, compared with the BBIRI training program delivered across the region.

#### **2.4.2 EQ13: To what extent have opportunities for value for money been realised (e.g. leveraging additional finance and in-kind support from IFC and World Bank)?**

**Value for Money, in terms of leveraging other finance and support for wider impacts, is inherent to the SARIC theory of change.** Injections of relatively small budget envelopes of support into ongoing technical assistance and pipeline engagement via the trust fund model, such as additional studies to nudge forward project design processes, allows DFAT to have targeted, dovetailed impact and leverage existing relationships and engagement (see Figure 3). With little-to-no time spent by partners in building these trusted relationships, the program funds are being applied directly to smaller, interesting and highly important activities that enable high-impact activities. This expenditure is low risk due to the well-established and respected World Bank and IFC ways of working.

#### **How SARIC is helping to unlock USD1 billion through the ACCESS program**

The MTR heard from key informant interviews and documentation the power that Trust Funds have in helping the World Bank engage in innovative, pioneering work, in testing and piloting approaches that can be scaled up through their own programs. SARIC is supporting the USD 1 billion ACCESS program through a relatively small analytical piece of work, in fostering collaboration alignment and learning on cross border transport corridor development and coordinated border management. SARIC is also building the evidence base and analytical foundation on crucial topics such as the economic costs of constraints that hamper free flow of goods and services across borders. These pieces will improve the effectiveness and impact of the ACCESS program, which aims to help improve regional trade in Bangladesh and Nepal by reducing trade and transport costs and transit time along regional corridors.

*Figure 3: How SARIC is helping to unlock USD 1 billion through the ACCESS program*

**SARIC is also effectively leveraging additional finance to deliver greater impact.** For example, in Bhutan, SARIC is in the process of developing concrete training activities targeted at government agencies (primarily Department of Hydropower and Power Systems, Ministry of Economic Affairs, and Druk Green Power Corporation), which the World Bank ESMAP trust fund has committed to fund.

#### **2.4.3 EQ14: Do the program activities overlap and duplicate other similar interventions?**

Overall, the review found that **the SARIC program builds on existing momentum in the region for support to invest in the infrastructure space, and the program effectively adds value without duplicating the efforts of others.**

This question links closely to EQ3 on the extent to which SARIC is aligned with other regional initiatives. Given the SARIC program's close alignment with regional initiatives, as presented above, there is an inherent risk of duplicating the efforts of the many development actors in the space. The review found that the combination of the scale of the investment requirement in the region with the multitude of inroads to provide support indicates that there is ample opportunity for development partners to engage in this space. To avoid duplicating or overlapping efforts, the review found that



the SARIC program relies on the embeddedness of its partners within the energy and transport sectors and, to some extent, engagement with Post to ensure its support is targeted to the priorities and needs of recipients.

In Bhutan, for example, the evidence indicates that **SARIC is filling an important gap in development support**, as many donors previously providing technical training (e.g. Austria) have closed their offices. In previous years, the issue of duplication may have been a risk. However, SARIC is providing funding for activities that would otherwise not be available through other means.

Several key informants highlighted the **USAID funded SAREP** and its predecessor South Asia Regional Initiative for Energy Integration (SARI/EI) phases 1-4 as similar in name and purpose to SARIC, which could pose a duplication risk for SARIC. The specific elements of SAREP that present overlap risks are in its support of power-trading between Bhutan, Bangladesh, India and Nepal through capacity building to Bangladesh and Nepal's power trading entities, and its engagement with private sector actors (such as Druk Green Power Corporation), all of which aims to enhance regional energy markets and integration. There may be opportunities for knowledge sharing and further alignment, given the similar overarching aims (in the energy sector, at least). Some potential linkages may be formed between knowledge gained through the various regional knowledge exchange platforms, which target different types of stakeholders to open up energy markets in the region:

- The World Bank reported that the first (SARIC) regional knowledge exchange of power executives from the BBIN was held by the World Bank in Bhutan in February 2023. The meeting was attended by delegates from Bhutan, Nepal, and Bangladesh (in person) and India (virtually). This new platform was reported to complement the Power Secretaries Roundtable being held on a semi-annual basis and has allowed the executives from Power Companies to discuss in detail how to further operationalize the BBIN electricity market and overcome obstacles. The power executives have agreed to meet on a regular basis, with the next meeting to be held in Nepal.
- USAID SAREP is working to develop regional institutions, such as the South Asia Forum for Electricity Markets, which notes World Bank as a key stakeholder for participation.
- The South Asia Energy Database developed under USAID SARI/EI, is expected to be expanded under SAREP to serve as a key resource for policymakers and utility managers in the region, and this may provide an opportunity for cross learning for SARIC partners.

The MTR suggests that the World Bank discusses opportunities for SARIC engagement with SAREP initiatives as part of reporting on opportunities in the Working Group meeting(s).

Within the program, training and capacity building are taking place by multiple partners, from bespoke, highly technical training (e.g. project viability, bankability of contracts by IFC) to practical capacity-building support in new skill areas (World Bank supporting government agencies to engage with PPPs). As such, the inclusion of Palladium for the TNS component presented a potential risk of duplicating or overlapping these existing pieces. However, efforts were made early on in the TNS component by Palladium to make connections with World Bank and IFC partners, from the Steering Group to Task Team Leaders, to identify the training needs of partner agencies and discuss and agree on ways that **Palladium could provide support without duplicating these efforts**. For example, in Bangladesh, the clients that IFC were engaged with are described as “top-level and experienced decision-makers who needed a concise and deep agenda and sector-specialised training” (KII), all of which the IFC team is well placed to drive forward, and as such the partners agreed for Palladium to help carry the load of the program of training, including two study tours in Hamburg and Saudi. The partners played to their strengths to deliver high-quality training services without overlapping or duplicating activities. The MTR found value in Palladium continuing to engage with IFC and World





Bank colleagues at multiple levels to identify training and networking opportunities, participants, and content.

**2.4.4 EQ15: How efficient are the management and accountability structures and financial management processes of the program? Are there more efficient ways/approaches and means of delivering more and better results (outputs and outcomes) with the available inputs?**

Many of the benefits and drawbacks of the management and accountability structures are presented in answer to EQ8 (see section 2.3.6), and these largely overlap with efficiency benefits, such as the management structure and the reliance on well-established internal management processes and systems of the World Bank and IFC. Financial reporting is touched on in this section as well regarding the Working Group meeting presentations and in section 2.3.8 (M&E effectiveness) regarding reporting system improvements around financial information. The MTR finding is that **efficiency is inherently built into the current management and accountability structures, and as such the MTR does not recommend alternative approaches to delivery that would achieve more or better results with the available inputs.**

## 2.5 Impact

**2.5.1 EQ16: What has been the overall impact of the SARIC investment to date for its beneficiaries?**

**As a program, SARIC has made progress on a number of separate projects and initiatives, which considered together are delivering the foundations for transformative impact.** Beneficiaries, in the context of SARIC, refer to government and private sector stakeholders receiving support from IFC, World Bank and Palladium. Impacts on broader beneficiaries, such as communities and economies as a result of increased connectivity and improved quality transport and energy infrastructure, will only be realised in the years following the SARIC program.

Given the program is seeking to build capacity within government and private sector beneficiaries to support private sector engagement in energy and transport infrastructure and regional connectivity, there is little reporting on the numbers and quality of this impact in the reporting processes beyond the reported support provided to stakeholders as part of the individual project. Stakeholders consulted with as part of the MTR reported that they value support from the World Bank and IFC and that their engagement is of high technical quality and in response to their needs. Some examples of change as a result of SARIC funding include:

- Analysis and technical studies in support of **the Bay Terminal in Bangladesh** contributed to the signing of a joint development agreement with a developer, with specific plans and budget allocations for ENS studies, which were the result of upstream support.
- The IFC's work with the Government of Bangladesh under SARIC to support **PPP development** has led to more comfort and openness to private sector engagement in infrastructure development.
- Supporting the Government of Bangladesh's **National Logistics Committee** with international studies has promoted the need to bring their own work up to international standards. It has also led to the uptake and use of skills in particular software for improved logistics planning.
- As a result of the first regional knowledge exchange of **power executives from the BBIN** in Bhutan, which has allowed the executives from Power Companies to discuss in detail how to operationalise the BBIN electricity market further and overcome obstacles, the power executives have agreed to meet on a regular basis.
- One participant from the **BBIRI training** noted that having learned that stakeholder consultation is important for projects in a country where large projects do not typically incorporate consultation. As a result of training, the stakeholder is taking special consideration for consultation across 80 PPP projects in their portfolio.



- In **Bhutan**, the government team working with SARIC partners is resulting in upskilling staff in international standards through handholding and training.
- Local expert consultants in Bhutan have reportedly gained expertise in social impact studies from working closely with international specialists as part of the SARIC-funded World Bank ENS support, which has been seen to be **applied to other projects in the country**.

### *2.5.2 EQ17: To what extent is SARIC on track to deliver its two End of Investment Outcomes*

The MTR found that SARIC is broadly on track to deliver its End of Investment Outcomes. This section seeks to tell the story of SARIC through the lens of economic connectivity (primarily looking at examples from Bangladesh) and regional energy market engagement (across Nepal, Bhutan and India), which together are expected to contribute to the creation of corridors of connectivity and energy security and resilience in the region.

#### *2.5.2.1 Supporting Cross-Border Trade and Connectivity*

One example of the transformative impact of SARIC on regional connectivity is in Bangladesh, where the physical and policy changes taking place are designed to support the flow of goods and finance throughout the region through improvements to sea and land ports, supported by effective logistics coordination and leadership, and targeted training.

IFC is supporting the **Patenga Container Terminal (PTC) PPP** with transaction advisory services for the potential concessions of the newly built terminal at the Chittagong Port in Bangladesh, drawing in private operators to attract private investment, improving efficiency and improve the overall performance of the port. The Chittagong Ports Authority (CPA), dealing with 92% of Bangladesh's total economy, strongly focuses on regional connectivity. IFC worked closely with the CPA to collaborate in the preparation of due diligence processes and organised a series of workshops and study tours with CPA to ports in Germany and Saudi Arabia to promote understanding and uptake of IFC recommendations. To support this initiative, Palladium is working with IFC to organise a **Ports Study Tour** to the Laem Chabang Port (LCP) in Thailand, to understand the policy reforms, legal and regulatory approaches and institutional practices adopted by the Government of Thailand that have led to the successful development of a globally competitive, high performing container port at LCP. Participants will be drawn from a range of government agencies, including the Chittagong Port Authority (CPA), the Ministry of Shipping, the Public Private Partnership Authority (PPPA) and Economic Relations Division of the Ministry of Finance.

As part of the **InfraLEAP Temperature Controlled Logistics** support project, IFC recognised the significant institutional fragmentation in Bangladesh, and that coordination is a key challenge to the logistics sector. In response, IFC sought to influence the government to establish a formal logistics coordination mechanism, which led to the formation of the National Logistics Development and Coordination Committee (NLDDC) in January 2022. Through the **Bangladesh Logistics Enhancement** project, the World Bank is complementing this milestone initiative by supporting the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) in developing a national logistics policy, likely to be released in June 2024. Given the importance of export logistics to Bangladesh's economy, improvements in coordination and attracting further investment are seen to be a crucial element in the country graduating from LDC status and through to Upper/Middle-Income status by 2030.

In support of cross-border transport corridor development and to better understand the constraints to the free flow of goods and services across borders, SARIC is providing two areas of technical assistance to the existing World Bank Accelerating Transport and Trade Connectivity in Eastern South Asia (ACCESS) Program Phase 1 (\$1.03 billion) under the **ACCESS Analytical Program**: supporting learning and convening platforms, and deepening the evidence base through analytical work and data collection. The results of this engagement will see reductions in trade and transport costs and transit time along the regional corridors between Nepal and Bangladesh. In relation to this, Palladium is



working with the World Bank and ICRIER to deliver a consultative workshop in Dhaka on ‘Gender Mainstreaming at Land Ports- Lessons from the Indian experience’.

### ***2.5.1.2 Regional Energy Markets Engagement***

SARIC is working to support regional integration of energy markets, through support to several pipeline projects and policy and regulatory environment support in the relevant countries. For example, the **SHDP project in Bhutan** seeks to provide for increasing domestic demand but also provide power to India and Bangladesh. SARIC supports the Government of Bhutan in coordinating regional knowledge exchange with financiers, which would not have been possible without SARIC and preparatory studies for developing the Dorjilung Hydropower Project (DHPP) and its associated transmission line.

In Nepal and India, and India and Bangladesh, IFC is working to support cross-border electricity trade via engagement with private and government (including the Power Secretary of Nepal) as part of the **South Asia Regional Power Trading** project. This project seeks to assess the legal, commercial and policy regulatory and technical barriers for private sector entities to engage in cross-border energy trade, and in pushing ahead initiatives with each counterpart government, and directing influence towards India opening up cross-border energy trade, seeks to provide the supportive environment for the trade of energy, some of which generated through SARIC supported projects.

Alongside the IFC’s support to private sector entities, the World Bank is looking to deliver the **Electricity Market of South Asia** project, working with government sector clients to engage with their regional counterparts to reach an agreement on energy trade and support regional project delivery.

### ***2.5.3 EQ18: How has SARIC supported and implemented GEDSI considerations and strategies in promoting infrastructure and service provisions for all (specifically women, people with a disability and marginalised groups)?***

The MTR found that **SARIC’s reliance on internal partner processes is a strength for SARIC because the program benefits from internationally recognised best practices with WB’s ESF approaches within complex infrastructure investments.** For example, The SARIC IDD and operations manual highlight that opportunities for integrating GEDSI into the program will vary according to the nature of projects selected for SARIC support. In particular, the extent to which projects interface with households, communities and users will impact how GEDSI risks need to be managed and mitigated within these groups as well as opportunities for maximising GEDSI benefits through project planning processes. Internal partner (WB/IFC) processes (such as ESF processes) ensure that pipeline projects mitigate and respond to potential gender risks. Indeed, the very design of the SARIC Trust Fund model hinges on trust in partner systems and processes.

However, **reliance on partner’s trusted systems and processes is challenging for SARIC as it limits opportunities for customised and bespoke SARIC-specific reporting.** Instead, SARIC must rely on partners’ internal timeframes for reporting around social assessments as part of their broader pipeline. To maintain this trust in partner systems, it is important for all SARIC partners to have a strong understanding of what these systems entail, as illustrated in the vignette below (Figure 4).

#### **Assessing and mitigating risks in the Bay Terminal Project (Bangladesh)**

As part of the SARIC Bay Terminal Project (completed), SARIC TA supported key environmental and social studies to identify potential feasibility risks associated with possible upstream investment to develop the Bay Terminal in Bangladesh. In line with the WB and IFC ESF approach, GEDSI is a crucial consideration in these processes, so this project included social assessments exploring opportunities and risks relating to gender representation (including national regulatory protections and gaps); risks relating to GBV and harassment (including an additional focus on refugees and human trafficking



which was particularly relevant to this project); and opportunities for participation of women, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in stakeholder engagement processes.

While the SARIC-supported activities focused on this baseline planning and feasibility stage of analysis for the larger pipeline project, the social analysis and reporting undertaken at this stage were highly influential in the decision-making over whether to proceed with further investment and development plans. A joint development agreement has now been signed for upstream development of the Bay Terminal, and the baseline social studies supported by SARIC will serve as core guiding resources for both the private sector operator and the Chittagong Ports Authority (CPA) as they develop implementation strategies to mitigate risks and realise recommendations over the next phase of the project.

*Figure 4: Assessing and mitigating risks in the Bay Terminal Project*

**Currently, partners' (WB/IFC) cross cutting GEDSI inputs and approaches at a project level are not visible to, or understood by, other SARIC partners, hampering the ability to tell the story of GEDSI within SARIC.** For example, Figure 2 demonstrates the program partner (WB/IFC) GEDSI processes and approaches that enable the integration of a cross-cutting GEDSI thread to be applied to SARIC-supported projects and the broader project pipeline. Most relevant to SARIC will be the extent to which these GEDSI processes inform project planning and decision-making, particularly through the support offered at the scoping and feasibility stage. The evidence of the effect of internal GEDSI processes on project partners is still emerging, due in part to project staging, given the Bay Terminal project is one of the only completed non-TNS SARIC projects at the time of the MTR. It is likely that once more SARIC projects come to a close, these effects will become evident, and captured as part of improved reporting tools, and end of program evaluation processes.

**A greater understanding of how GEDSI is integrated through WB ESF and Feasibility processes would greatly increase the ability to communicate SARIC's approach to GEDSI at this project level.** As more SARIC-supported projects draw to completion, there will likely be opportunities for the M&E Coordinator to work with partners to capture these GEDSI inputs in project planning. There are already strong indications that this will be an important thread for the Dorjilung Hydropower Project (Bhutan), through which SARIC technical assistance is supporting preparatory studies such as environmental and social impact assessments as part of WB feasibility processes.

#### **2.5.3.1 GEDSI in Training and Networking Activities**

**The MTR found that the TNS component has a crucial role to play in SARIC's impact on GEDSI by supporting the mainstreaming of GEDSI content into all training activities, in turn building capacity in the public and private sector to mitigate and respond to gender risks.** For example, by mainstreaming GEDSI content into training, such as the discussion of ESG issues and human rights as part of the October 2023 Dam Safety Training in Hobart, SARIC is exposing a diverse network of infrastructure actors to these crucial themes as well as modelling best practice from a gender mainstreaming perspective.

**More than mainstreaming, the TNS component also delivers targeted GEDSI training and learning content for infrastructure professionals in the region, contributing to improved knowledge and practice among the region's energy and transport sector implementing partners.** For example, the Building Blocks for Inclusive Regional Infrastructure Projects (BBIRI) short course was designed in response to a training needs assessment that highlighted a need for improved ESG and GEDSI knowledge among IFC and WB's implementing partners in the energy and transport sectors. GEDSI was a key inclusive infrastructure theme and was incorporated via two sessions on gender-sensitive inclusive infrastructure policy, a dedicated session on the need for GEDSI in the context of South Asia Infrastructure and the Sustainable Development Goals, and three sessions devoted to participant reflections on GEDSI implications in the PPP sector. Following the training, 100% of participants



responded that they were likely to disseminate learnings within their teams and organisations and self-reported significant increases in knowledge on GEDSI issues.

Through FGDs, the MTR team heard one participant in the energy sector report that the BBIRI short course spawned the development of guidelines for vulnerable, remote and marginalised stakeholder consultations within their organisation. Another participant noted that the GEDSI learning gained in the BBIRI short course, as well as the disability accommodations observed during their visit to Australia, highlighted a need for accessibility audits of Bangladesh's railway stations, and this participant is now seeking to mainstream disability-inclusive design features into all new station construction or redevelopment processes.

**As discussed in response to EQ6, the M&E systems do not enable longer term tracking of impact at the institutional level in relation to GEDSI or other learning outcomes,** which presents a challenge in collecting insights as to which areas of learning became embedded with whom.

**SARIC is also contributing to building a strong peer network of female professionals within the region through targeted training opportunities.** This occurs through deliberate participant selection processes, with a view to balancing and representation of people with disabilities and women (40% of the inaugural BBIRI cohort were women), and through the utilisation of female-only spaces to build a network of peers, which is particularly relevant to women working in traditionally male-dominated sectors such as energy and transport. For example, SARIC has adapted the World Bank training formerly known as "WePower" into the SAR100 Large Systems Training Program (LSTP), an 8-month online training via the Asia Institute for Technology. FGDs conducted with LSTP participants from Bangladesh and Nepal highlighted the value of this peer networking regional collaboration opportunity. One participant from Nepal reflected, "I'm confident that I won't be the same person I was before the training", when reflecting on their levels of confidence as a practitioner in their field.

## 2.6 Sustainability

### 2.6.1 *EQ19: To what extent are SARIC's interventions likely to be sustained after completion of the program?*

The MTR finds that sustainability is built into the SARIC theory of change, given that it supports a number of policy change and infrastructure development activities with much larger and longer term impacts beyond the life of SARIC. For example, the World Bank's support for the establishment of the National Logistics Development and Coordination Committee (NLDDC) in Bangladesh and its subcommittees and IFC's assistance to the Bangladesh PPP Authority, the regulatory and public sector processes and systems will see tangible improvements that will have impacts for the future. Similarly, SARIC support for large-scale infrastructure developments, such as the SHDP in Bhutan and the privatisation of the Sri Lankan airline, will lead to longer-term changes and impacts that will endure beyond the program itself. Finally, in establishing valued networks of training cohorts and alumni across the region, SARIC will support the creation of long-lasting connections and relationships with industry professionals, which is already bearing fruit. If nurtured through DFAT Post and other partner opportunities, these relationships will last beyond the SARIC program.

### 2.6.2 *EQ19a: To what extent are implementing partners being supported to build their internal/institutional GEDSI capacity (e.g. policy environment etc) beyond the life of the program?*

As noted above, the BBIRI training program and the mainstreaming of GEDSI components in all training courses are embedding GEDSI considerations within government and private sector entities across the region. Some early examples of impact are reported above, and this is evidence to suggest that stakeholders are taking their knowledge and actively applying it in their institutions, which is



likely to last beyond the life of the program. Early discussions have been reported as to coordinating SARIC alumni with the wider Australia Awards alumni program, and this is welcomed by the MTR in terms of raising the potential for sustainability.

### *2.6.3 EQ20: How effective are the exit strategies, and approaches to phase out assistance provided by the program including contributing factors and constraints?*

Given that the support of the World Bank and IFC will continue to be provided to the regional governments, as part of their country strategies, the concept of an exit strategy is not entirely relevant to the SARIC program. The project-based approach to implementing components 1 and 2 lends itself to ensuring that support is provided in a strategic and discrete fashion, such as delivering technical studies, feeding into wider initiatives. The TNS component is more likely to come up against challenges in phasing out of its work, particularly in managing the alumni networks and engaging in any longitudinal assessment of impacts on the capacity of institutions in the region due to training and networking. Bringing the management of alumni close to the Australia Awards program is a start, however, there is a risk, particularly in the final year of the TNS component as it relies on inputs from the World Bank and IFC for course identification, development and nominations, and SARIC support will have come to a close for those partners at that stage. The program would benefit from Palladium developing a strategy to mitigate those risks, and presenting to the program partners any additional requests for time or support over the last year of TNS implementation.

### *2.6.4 EQ21: What are the main lessons learned and how can these inform future strategic directions?*

A number of lessons have been uncovered through the MTR, many around implementation processes as detailed in the Effectiveness findings. One area where lessons were revealed in the MTR that have not come to bear in the report related to **collaborative working with local counterparts**. For example, in Bhutan, political buy-in and ownership were found to be critical in progressing any investment or reform-related activities, and approaches to building relationships can vary based on local contexts. As the experience in Bhutan has shown, co-development of activities with government agencies is a useful way to build ownership.

In Bangladesh, the PSA Port Environment and Social Studies project was collaborative in nature, in that IFC had to work closely with the client to deliver assessments and studies that would aid the feasibility and design of a port terminal. While ensuring that the studies undertaken conformed to IFC's performance standards, early on, the project team established an ongoing rather than a periodic communications routine. The project, therefore, benefited from the active participation of the client in developing the scope of the studies, hiring the consultant, and continuously tracking progress. During the implementation of the studies, the client participated in bi-weekly meetings as well as reviewed the ToRs and documents. Being on board throughout meant that the client supported the process of getting government permission for field visits and for gathering socio-economic data, even when the circumstances were difficult (e.g., COVID-19).

## 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

A range of suggestions are made throughout the report to improve the program, and the priority actions have been brought together into the following list of 10 recommendations:

### *Working Group Meetings*

1. It is recommended that the DFAT Investment Manager, as Chair, updates the Working Group Meeting agenda to incorporate the areas discussed in section 2.3.6 and with reference to the suggested agenda presented in Annex 5. Specific areas for inclusion are partner reporting of



progress against outcome, intermediate outcome and output level result statements, and validity of the program and assessment of financial progress.

2. It is recommended that the DFAT Investment Manager in collaboration with the SARIC partners develop a thematic focus area for alternate Working Group meetings, drawing in TTLs and DFAT post representatives to share thematic expertise and lessons from implementation.

#### *Early-Stage Project Identification*

3. It is recommended that IFC and World Bank provide additional information on the process of early-stage project identification, by incorporating progress at this stage of work in program updates at Working Group Meetings, with basic information on sector, type of activity and timeline of expenditure.
4. It is recommended that DFAT lead a discussion with the Steering Committee and come to agreement on whether and how any additional meaningful consultation with DFAT could take place at this stage of project selection.

#### *Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting*

5. It is recommended that the M&E Coordinator works closely with all partners to develop and agree on targets at output, intermediate outcome, and outcome levels of the results framework.
6. It is recommended that the M&E Coordinator, in collaboration with partner M&E Coordinators, to revise the reporting template so that it gathers progress and achievements against output and outcome results statement and indicators.
7. It is recommended that the DFAT Investment Manager review and discuss with SARIC partners the proposed improvements to program M&E including the adjustments suggested in Annex 6.

#### *Risk Management*

8. It is recommended that World Bank and IFC provide additional plans to bolster threat monitoring activities, and plans for engagement with DFAT on identifying political and/or diplomatic inroads to support the enabling environment.

#### *Visibility*

9. It is recommended that all partners play a role in improving the brand identity of SARIC, firstly by working with Palladium to use the LinkedIn platform to tell stories of change, and more broadly to communicate the message of transport and energy corridors being created in the region.

#### *GEDSI*

10. It is recommended that WB and IFC increase the visibility of their internal GEDSI processes within SARIC-supported project cycles (particularly project gender tagging, ESF processes, social assessment and feasibility reporting); and that Palladium continues to prioritise inclusive infrastructure training and support, and seek out opportunities to integrate disability inclusion.



## Annex 1 – Evaluation Questions

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Questions
<b>Relevance</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To what extent does SARIC remain relevant in addressing, supporting and guiding infrastructure provision in South Asia? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the program respond to the needs of the beneficiaries?</li> <li>• To what extent has the project remained relevant to the priorities of DFAT, the World Bank and IFC?</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Is the strategy adopted and inputs/outputs identified, realistic, appropriate and adequate for achievement of the results? (i.e., is the TOC still relevant and causal pathways justifiable? Is the gender strategy / GEDSI issues embedded in the TOC?</li> </ol>
<b>Coherence</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. To what extent has the project aligned with other infrastructure initiatives in the region?</li> <li>4. To what extent has the project promoted a joint response and better engagement between partners (DFAT, IFC and World Bank), and between partner governments? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent is there a shared understanding/alignment on GEDSI as cross-cutting issues and how SARIC can best respond to GEDSI gaps and opportunities?</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
<b>Effectiveness</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. To what extent is progress under SARIC on track towards three Intermediate Outcomes and Outputs? Is the level of progress as expected at this point in the program? What results can we show so far? Are outputs and outcomes suitably inclusive?</li> <li>6. Does the M&amp;E framework support implementation and effectively track progress/results? Is it appropriate to all partners? How is GEDSI considered?</li> <li>7. To what extent has the broader contextual environment influenced and contributed towards the “forecast” achievement (or non-achievement) of End of Investment Outcomes?</li> <li>8. To what extent is SARIC’s partnership, governance and program management mechanisms and arrangements effective? Is the current model appropriate and does it generate coherence and learning? Does it promote and demonstrate Australia’s value add to the region?</li> <li>9. Are there opportunities or innovative ways of working for the remainder of SARIC?</li> <li>10. What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the program implementation process? To what extent are gender safeguards risks (such as PSEAH) being addressed through program implementation/partner training support? What risks, if any, of this nature have been identified?</li> <li>11. To what extent does SARIC address climate change concerns? How can the activities consider climate change to a greater extent?</li> </ol>
<b>Efficiency</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. To what extent is SARIC being delivered efficiently? What factors are facilitating or impacting efficiency? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looking at economy, timeliness, cost effectiveness, value for money.</li> </ul> </li> <li>13. To what extent have opportunities for value for money been realised (e.g., leveraging additional finance and in-kind support from IFC and World Bank)?</li> <li>14. Do the program activities overlap and duplicate other similar interventions?</li> <li>15. How efficient are the management and accountability structures, and financial management processes of the program? Are there more efficient ways/approaches and means of delivering more and better results (outputs and outcomes) with the available inputs?</li> </ol>
<b>Impact</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16. What has been the overall impact of the SARIC investment to date for its beneficiaries?</li> </ol>





Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Questions
	<p>17. To what extent is SARIC on track to deliver its two End of Investment Outcomes?</p> <p>18. How has SARIC supported and implemented GEDSI considerations and strategies in promoting infrastructure and service provisions for all (specifically women, people with a disability and marginalised groups)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What are some tangible examples of what could be done to improve on these initiatives?</li></ul>
<b>Sustainability</b>	<p>19. To what extent are SARIC's interventions likely to be sustained after completion of the program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To what extent are implementing partners being supported to build their internal/institutional GEDSI capacity (e.g., policy environment etc) beyond the life of the program?</li></ul> <p>20. How effective are the exit strategies, and approaches to phase out assistance provided by the program including contributing factors and constraints?</p> <p>21. What are the main lessons learned and how can these inform future strategic directions?</p>



## Annex 2 – Stakeholder Consultations

### KIIs (Decision Makers)

Name	Organisation	Country	Project(s)
Matthew Lapworth	DFAT	Regional	SARIC Steering Committee
Ishara Davey	DFAT	Regional	SARIC Working Group
Andrew Dollimore	DFAT	Regional	SARIC Working Group
Mandakini Kaul	World Bank	Regional	SARIC Working Group
Daniel Crabtree	IFC	Regional	SARIC Working Group
Poorna Bhattacharjee	IFC	Regional	SARIC Working Group / M&E
Farheen Khurram	Palladium	Regional	SARIC Working Group
Shivani Manaktala	Palladium	Regional	SARIC Working Group
Ty Morrissey	ASI	Regional	SARIC Working Group / M&E

### KIIs (Implementing Partners)

Name	Organisation	Country	Project(s)
Sanjay Gupta	World Bank	Regional	WB SARIC Working Group
Debbie Menezes	World Bank	Regional	SARIC M&E
Shruti Vijayakumar	World Bank	Regional (Nepal & Bangladesh)	Nepal Civil Aviation & ACCESS
Fanny Missfeldt-Ringius	World Bank	Bhutan	Bhutan Hydro Power
Bhishma Pandit	IFC	Nepal	South Asia Power Trading
Saule Imanova	IFC	Bangladesh	Patenga Container Terminal & HSIA Airport
Moazzam Mekan	IFC	Bangladesh	Patenga Container Terminal & HSIA Airport
Lutfullah Mohammad	IFC	Bangladesh	InfraLEAP
Kate Lazarus	IFC	Bangladesh	Bay Terminal
Rahajeng Pratiwi	IFC	Bangladesh	Bay Terminal
Abhirup Bhunia	Palladium	Regional	SARIC M&E
Amanda Ashworth	Entura	Regional	TNS Training Provider
Leesa deGroot	Entura	Regional	TNS Training Provider
Ajit Garg	Entura	Regional	TNS Training Provider
Anna Blake	Entura	Regional	TNS Training Provider
Mike Budahazy	Entura	Regional	TNS Training Provider
Sammy Gibbs	Entura	Regional	TNS Training Provider

### KIIs (Direct Beneficiaries)

Name	Organisation	Country	Project(s)
	BIDA	Bangladesh	InfraLEAP
Md Abdul Bashir	PPPA	Bangladesh	Patenga Container Terminal
Commodore Mahbubur Rahman	Chittagong Port Authority	Bangladesh	Patenga Container Terminal
Dr Masrur Reaz	Policy Exchange of Bangladesh	Bangladesh	ACCESS
	PMO	Bangladesh	InfraLEAP & ACCESS
	Govt of Bhutan	Bhutan	Bhutan Hydro
Sandip Dev	Ministry of Energy, Water Resources, and Irrigation	Nepal	South Asia Power Trading



Name	Organisation	Country	Project(s)
Shailesh Mishra	Independent Power Producers Association of Nepal (IPPAN)	Nepal	South Asia Power Trading
Ananda Vie	Power Trade and Energy Exchange	Nepal	South Asia Power Trading

### KIIs (Adjacent Actors)

Name	Organisation	Country	Project(s)
Mitali Nikore	World Bank	Regional	Transport Specialist / Gender Mainstreaming in Land Ports Training
Nitol Dewan	DFAT Post	Bangladesh	DFAT Post
Joshua Gacutan	DFAT Post	Bangladesh	DFAT Post
Kavintha Kasynathan	DFAT Post	Nepal	DFAT Post
Danielle Cashen	DFAT Post	Pakistan	DFAT Post
Andrew Hodges	DFAT Post	Maldives	DFAT Post
Habbi Karthigesan	DFAT Post	Sri Lanka	DFAT Post

### Focus Group Discussions

Name(s)	FGD no	Country	Scope
Ishara Davey Ty Morrisey Mandakini Kaul Daniel Crabtree Poorna Bhattacharjee Farheen Khurram Shivani Manaktala	FGD 1	Regional	SARIC Working Group
Najnin Ara Keya Md Anisur Rahman Habib Anwaru Sheikh Sakiluddin Ahmed	FGD2	Bangladesh	BBIRI Alumni
Sharmin Aktar Nusrat Wara Sujana Salvin Shahin Are Begum Afsana Afroze Trina Monami Islam Towhida Mahfuz Rosaleena Rafique Faria Haque Pushpo Shameema Ruet Minhajur Rahman	FGD2.5	Bangladesh	LSTP Participants
Saumitra Neupane Anurag Pokharel Umesh Bindu Shrestha	FGD 3	Nepal	BBIRI Alumni
Asha Khanal Poonam Pandey Swasti Aryal Laxmi Jha Sarita Panthi Rashmi Adhikari	FGD3.5	Nepal	LSTP Participants



Name(s)	FGD no	Country	Scope
Pramila Chaudhary Asha Khanal			
Mr Yasantha Rathuvithana	FGD4	Sri Lanka	BBIRI Alumni
Dr. Lhendup Namgyal Ms Pratigya Pradhan Ms Rinchen Lhamo Mr Kuenzang Dorji Ms Wangmo Mr Kinzang Wangdi Mr Rinchen Dorji Mr. Vasanthan Kathirgamathamby Mr. Hewawasam Gamage Luminda Niroshana Gunawardhana Mr. De Silva, Petthayaddehi Kasun Chirantha Ms Mon Devi Shrestha Mr Sunil Poudel Mr Bashanta Dhoj Shrestha Mr Bimal Gurung Er. Fanendra Raj Joshi Er. Surendra Prasad Singh Chaudhary Ms. Rekha Rani Kollu Mr. Mahendra Singh Varma Mr. Samir Kumar Shukla Mr. Gali Srinivasulu Mr. Vivek Kumar Verma	FGD5	Regional – Bhutan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka	Dam Safety Training Participants



## Annex 3 – Mid Term Review Trip Schedule

### Monday 18 September, Singapore

Stakeholder Name	Project Name	Meeting Location	MTR Team member, key contact	Additional Notes (in local times)
SARIC Working Group Meeting	SARIC	IFC Office	Cat Renshaw (remote), Tait Brimacombe & SARIC Working Group members	10am-12pm @ IFC Office, Singapore (with virtual participation)
KII with IFC decision-makers	SARIC - IFC	IFC Office	Tait Brimacombe, Daniel Crabtree & Poorna Bhattacharjee (remote)	1-2pm @ IFC Office, Singapore (with remote participation) (closed MTR session)

### Tuesday, 19 September, Bangladesh (Dhaka, Chattogram)

Stakeholder Name	Project Name	Meeting Location	MTR Team member, key contact	Additional Notes (in local times)
Md Abul Bashar, Director General, PPP Authority	Patenga Container Terminal Project	Dhaka	Tait Brimacombe, Mohammad Lutfullah (IFC TTL)	9-10 AM @ PPA Office (Full team)
Chittagong Port Authority, Commodore Mahbubur Rahman	Patenga Container Terminal Project	Chattogram	Tait Brimacombe, Moazzam Mekan (IFC TTL)	3-4PM @ Chittagong Port Authority, followed by Ports Tour (Full team)
KII with IFC TTL	Patenga Container Terminal Project	Chattogram	Tait Brimacombe, Moazzam Mekan	6pm-7pm (closed MTR session)

### Wednesday, 20 September, Bangladesh (Dhaka)



Stakeholder Name	Project Name	Meeting Location	MTR Team member, key contact	Additional Notes (in local times)
Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA)	InfraLEAP	Dhaka	Tait Brimacombe, Mohammad Lutfullah (IFC TTL)	9am-10am @ Intercontinental Hotel (full team)
KII with Australian High Commission, Dhaka	SARIC	Australian High Commission, Dhaka	Tait Brimacombe, Nitol Dewan & Joshua Gacutan	12pm – 1pm Tait Brimacombe (closed MTR session)
Dr. Masrur Reaz, Chairperson, Policy Exchange of Bangladesh (Think Tank)	ACCESS	Dhaka	Tait Brimacombe, Nusrat Nahid Babi (WB)	3pm – 4pm BDT (full team)
FGD with Training Alumni: Najnin Ara Keya - Project Director with the Bangladesh Railways Md Anisur Rahman - Joint Secretary with the Road Transport and Highways Division Habib Anwarul, Director – PPP Authority, Bangladesh Sheikh Sakiluddin Ahmed, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Railways	Building Blocks for Inclusive Regional Infrastructure Projects (BBIRI)	Westin Hotel, Dhaka	Tait Brimacombe, Shivani Manaktala (Palladium)	4:30-5:30 PM (Strategic facilitated FGD, with accompaniment from full team)
Networking Event with Training Alumni & Participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• x BBIRI alumni (as above)</li> <li>• 10 x LSTP Training Participants</li> </ul> LSTP Participants Included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharmin Aktar, Electrical Generation Company of Bangladesh</li> <li>• Nusrat Wara, Power Grid Company of Bangladesh (PGCB)</li> <li>• Sujana Salvin, PGCB</li> <li>• Shahin Are Begum, Dhaka Electrical Supply Company</li> <li>• Afsana Afroze Trina, Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB)</li> <li>• Monami Islam, BPDB</li> <li>• Towhida Mahfuz, BPDB</li> <li>• Rosaleena Rafique, BPDB</li> <li>• Faria Haque Pushpo, West Zone Power Distribution Company</li> </ul>	Building Blocks for Inclusive Regional Infrastructure Projects (BBIRI) & Large Systems Training Program (LSTP) Participants	Westin Hotel, Dhaka	Tait Brimacombe, Shivani Manaktala (Palladium)	5:30-6:30 PM (full team networking opportunity)



Stakeholder Name	Project Name	Meeting Location	MTR Team member, key contact	Additional Notes (in local times)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shameema Ruet, Power Grid Company of Bangladesh</li> </ul>				

#### Thursday, 21 September, Bangladesh (Dhaka)

Stakeholder Name	Project Name	Meeting Location	MTR Team member, key contact	Additional Notes (in local times)
KII with Palladium	SARIC - Palladium	Westin Hotel Dhaka	Tait Brimacombe, Shivani Manaktala	10am-11am @ Westin Hotel (closed MTR session)
KII with IFC TTLs	Patenga Container Terminal Project & InfraLEAP	IFC Office, Dhaka	Tait Brimacombe, Mohammad Lutfullah & Saule Imanova (remote)	11 am – 12.30pm @ IFC Office (closed MTR session, with accompaniment from Daniel Crabtree & Shivani Manaktala)
KII with World Bank	SARIC – World Bank	Westin Hotel, Dhaka	Tait Brimacombe, Sanjay Gupta	12.45-1.45 @ Westin Hotel (closed MTR session)

#### Monday, 25 September, Nepal (Kathmandu)

Stakeholder Name	Project Name	Meeting Location	MTR Team member, key contact	Additional Notes (in local times)
KII with WB TTL	Bhutan HydroPower Project	WB Office ,	Tait Brimacombe, Fanny Missfeldt-Ringius (remote)	10am – 11am @ WB KTM Office (full team)
Bhutan Government	Bhutan HydroPower Development Project	Kathmandu	WB - Fanny and Bhutanese Delegation	11am – 12noon @ KB KTM Office
FGD with Training Alumni: Saumitra Neupane, Executive Director – Policy Entrepreneurs Incorporated Umesh Bindu Shrestha, Deputy Director General- Department of Roads Anurag Pokharel - Senior Analyst at VRock & Company	Building Blocks for Inclusive Regional Infrastructure Projects (BBIRI)	Yak and Yeti Hotel	Cat Renshaw, Tait Brimacombe & Abhirup Bhunia (Palladium)	2- 3PM @ Yak & Yeti (Strategic facilitated FGD, with accompaniment from full team)
Networking Event with Training Alumni & Participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>x BBIRI alumni (as above)</li> </ul>	Building Blocks for Inclusive Regional Infrastructure Projects	Yak and Yeti Hotel	Tait Brimacombe & Abhirup Bhunia (Palladium)	3-4pm @ Yak & Yeti (full team networking opportunity)



Stakeholder Name	Project Name	Meeting Location	MTR Team member, key contact	Additional Notes (in local times)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7 x LSTP Training Participants</li> </ul> LTSP Participants Included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asha Khanal, Nepal Engineers Association</li> <li>Poonam Pandey, Department of Electricity Development</li> <li>Swasti Aryal, Butwal Power Company Ltd</li> <li>Laxmi Jha, Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation</li> <li>Sarita Panthi, Nepal Electricity Authority</li> <li>Rashmi Adhikari, Nepal Electricity Authority</li> <li>Pramila Chaudhary, Nepal Electricity Authority</li> </ul>	(BBIRI) & Large Systems Training Program (LSTP) Participants			
Ananda Vie - Independent Power Producers Association of Nepal (IPPAN)	South Asia Power Trading	Kathmandu	Cat Renshaw, Bhishma Pandit (IFC TTL)	4pm – 5pm (full team)
KII with Palladium	SARIC - Palladium	Yak and Yeti	Tait Brimacombe, Abhirup Bhunia (Palladium)	6pm @ Yak & Yeti (closed MTR session)

### Tuesday, 26 September, Nepal (Kathmandu)

Stakeholder Name	Project Name	Meeting Location	MTR Team member, key contact	Additional Notes (in local times)
Breakfast meeting with Kavitha Kasynathan, Head of Development, Australian Embassy	SARIC	Yak and Yeti	Cat Renshaw, Tait Brimacombe, Kavitha Kasynathan	8am-9am @ Yak & Yeti (MTR Team, Ty Morrisey & Ishara Davey)
Sandip Dev - Joint Secretary, Ministry of Energy, Water Resources, and Irrigation	South Asia Power Trading	Kathmandu	Cat Renshaw, Tait Brimacombe & Bhishma Pandit (IFC TTL)	10.30am – 11.30am @ Ministry Office (full team)
Sandip Shah - Power Trade and Energy Exchange	South Asia Power Trading	IFC Office	Cat Renshaw, Tait Brimacombe & Bhishma Pandit (IFC TTL)	12pm – 1pm @ IFC Office (full team)
KII with WB TTL	Nepal Civil Aviation	WB Office	Cat Renshaw, Tait Brimacombe, Shruti Vijaykumar (WB TTL) & Charles E. Schlumberger	4:45pm – 5:45pm (7am DC) @ WB Office (closed MTR session, with accompaniment from Ty Morrisey)





Wednesday, 27 September, Nepal (Kathmandu)

Stakeholder Name	Project Name	Meeting Location	MTR Team member, key contact	Additional Notes (in local times)
KII with IFC TTLs	South Asia Power Trading	IFC Office	Cat Renshaw, Tait Brimacombe, Bishma Pandit & Kamana KC Shah (IFC TTLs)	9am-10am @ IFC Office (closed MTR session, accompaniment from Ty Morrisey)



## Annex 4 – List of Documents

- Abt Associates Australia, 2018, “Independent Evaluation of the IFG and SARTFP Programs”
- ASI, 2016, “Gender Equality Advisory Services for Infrastructure Programs: Gender Review”  
<https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/infrastructure-programs-gender-review.pdf>
- DFAT, 2023, SARIC Working Group Meeting M&E Update Presentation Slides, 18 September 2023”
- DFAT, “SARIC Annual Report 2021”
- DFAT, “SARIC Summary M&E Framework”
- DFAT, 2015, “Development for All 2015-2020: Strategy for strengthening disability-inclusive development in Australia’s aid program”  
<https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/development-for-all-2015-2020.pdf>
- DFAT, 2015, “Strategy for Australia’s Aid Investments in Economic Infrastructure”  
<https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/economic-infrastructure-development-strategy.pdf>
- DFAT, 2016, “Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Strategy”  
<https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment-strategy.pdf>
- DFAT, 2018, “SARIC Framework Document”
- DFAT, 2019, “SARIC Theory of Change”
- DFAT, 2020, “SARIC Inception Risk Register”
- DFAT, 2020, “South Asia Regional Infrastructure Connectivity (SARIC) Framework”  
<https://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/development/south-asia-regional-infrastructure-connectivity-saric-framework>
- DFAT, 2020, SARIC Framework Document Concept Note for Training Services”
- DFAT, 2021, “2020-21 South Asia Regional Development Program Progress Report”
- DFAT, 2023, “Annual Investment Monitoring Report SARIC 2022”
- DFAT, 2023, “Australia’s International Development Performance and Delivery Framework”
- DFAT, 2023, “Australia’s International Development Policy”
- DFAT, 2023, “Monitoring and Evaluating Development: Before/after the New International Development Policy”
- DFAT, 2023, “Overarching SARIC Narrative”
- DFAT, 2023, “Partner Performance Assessment, International Finance Corporation, SARIC 2022”
- DFAT, 2023, “Partner Performance Assessment, Palladium International PTY LTD, SARIC 2022-2023”
- DFAT, 2023, “Partner Performance Assessment, World Bank, SARIC 2022”
- DFAT, 2023, “SARIC Horizon Scan”
- DFAT, 2023, Annual Investment Monitoring Report SARTF, January 2022 to December 2022”
- DFAT, 2023, On-Going and Completed Pipeline Activities”
- Druk Green, 2023, “Update on Sustainable Hydropower Development Project Presentation Slides, September 30, 2023”
- Government of Bangladesh, 2020, “Making Vision 2041 a Reality, Perspective Plan of Bangladesh, 2021-2041”
- IFC, “Potential Transaction Advisory for the Operation & Maintenance (O&M) of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA), Dhaka, Bangladesh”
- IFC, 2019, “SAR Regional Cooperation and Integration TFs Proposal”
- IFC, 2021, “Gender Equality, Infrastructure and PPPs: A Primer”  
<https://www.ifc.org/content/dam/ifc/doc/mgrt/gender-and-ppps-primer.pdf>
- IFC, 2022, “SARIC Annual Report: January 2021-December 2021”
- IFC, 2023, “Engineering Inclusivity: Infrastructure for Everyone” [IFC Online Gender and Infrastructure toolkit] <https://commdev.org/infra-gender-toolkit/>
- IFC, 2023, “INFRALEAP – DFAT Comments & IFC Responses”



IFC, Sustainable Hydropower Development Project, “SAR Regional Cooperation and Integration TFs Proposal”

International Finance Corporation, 2022, “FIAS Fiscal Year 2022 Annual Review, December 2022”

International Finance Corporation, 2023, “SARIC, Steering Committee Meeting Presentation Slides, May 23, 2023”

International Finance Corporation, 2023, “SARIC, Working Group Meeting Presentation Slides, September 18, 2023”

Palladium, “SARIC TNS GEDSI Strategy 2022-25”

Palladium, “SARIC TNS GEDSI Strategy 2022-25”

Palladium, 2022, “Minutes of Meeting, SARIC First Working Group Meeting, March 28, 2022”

Palladium, 2022, “Process Case Study: Year 1 (Dec 2022)”

Palladium, 2022, “SARIC TNS Annual Plan- July 2022-June 2023”

Palladium, 2022, “SARIC TNS Annual Progress Report: December 2021 to June 2022”

Palladium, 2022, “SARIC TNS Monitoring and Evaluation Plan”

Palladium, 2023, “Minutes of Meeting, SARIC SARTFP Second Donor Steering Committee, May 23, 2023”

Palladium, 2023, “Minutes of Meeting, SARIC Third Working Group Meeting, September 18, 2023”

Palladium, 2023, “SARIC TNS Annual Plan- July 2023- June 2024”

Palladium, 2023, “SARIC TNS Annual Progress Report: July 2022 to March 2023”

Partnership for South Asia, 2022, “SARTFP Gender Assessment, Attachment to 2022 SARTFP Annual Report, January 1 to December 31, 2022”

SARIC Gender in Infrastructure Podcast

SARIC Overarching Investment Design Narrative

SARIC Podcast, 2023, “SARIC Podcast Transcript Episode 1: Why Gender and Social Inclusion Matters in Infrastructure”

SARIC, 2021, “Operations Manual”

SARIC, 2021, “SARIC Operations Manual”

SARTFP Annual Report (2019)

SARTFP, 2019, “Annex 3, Trust Funds and the World Bank’s Growing Focus on Gender Equality in the South Asia Region, 2019 SARTFP Annual Report January 1 to December 31, 2019”

WePOWER, “Concept Note for Technical Training Series for Women in the Energy Sector”

World Bank, “Maximizing Finance for Development PDF”

World Bank, 2010, “Analysis of Recipient Executed Trust Funds”

World Bank, 2015, “World Bank Group Gender Strategy (FY16-23): Gender Equality, Poverty Reduction and Inclusive Growth”

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<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/820851467992505410/pdf/102114-REVISED-PUBLIC-WBG-Gender-Strategy.pdf>

World Bank, 2016, “South Asia Regional Gender Action Plan (RGAP) FY16-FY21”

World Bank, 2016, “South Asia Regional Gender Action Plan, FY16- FY21”

World Bank, 2019, “Good Practice Note: Environment & Social Framework for IPF Operations: Gender” <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/158041571230608289-0290022019/original/GoodPracticeNoteGender.pdf>

World Bank, 2020, “World Bank’s Approach to South Asia Regional Integration, Cooperation and Engagement (SA RICE) 2020-2023”

World Bank, 2021, “Building Resilience to Climate Related Hazards Project”

World Bank, 2021, “World Climate Services Operational Pathways, Pathways for Transforming Weather, Water and Climate Services in Nepal Report”

World Bank, 2022, “South Asia Regional Gender Action Plan II, 2023-2028”



World Bank, 2022a, “South Asia Regional Gender Action Plan (RGAP) II 2023-2028”

World Bank, 2022b, “Disability Inclusion and Accountability Framework”

<https://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/epdf/10.1596/38345>

World Bank, 2022c, “Technical Note on Accessibility: Fact Sheet 5: Accessibility in the Infrastructure Operations” <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/228314b2c11c0e5cee2af40998878dbc-0320012022/original/WBG-TECHNICAL-NOTE-PART-3-5.pdf>

World Bank, 2023, “Bangladesh - Country Partnership Framework for the period FY2023- FY2027”

World Bank, 2023, “Draft: World Bank Group Gender Strategy (2023-2030): Accelerate Gender Equality for a Sustainable, Resilient and Inclusive Future”

World Bank, 2023, “SARIC, Working Group Meeting Presentation Slides, September 18, 2023”

World Bank, 2023, “SARTFP SARIC, Donor Steering Committee Meeting Presentation Slides, May 23, 2023”



## Annex 5 – Suggested Working Group Meeting Agenda

1. **Chair's Introduction** (DFAT Assistant Director SAR)
2. **Discussion on validity of the program logic** (M&E Coordinator): Do the assumptions remain valid? Are projects and activities in line with the theory of change? How has the program evolved in its pathways to deliver the EoIOs?
3. **Partner presentations** (World Bank, IFC, Palladium): Progress against Outputs and Outcomes, Opportunities and Risks
4. **Assessment of financial progress** (DFAT Assistant Director SAR)
5. **M&E update** (M&E Coordinator)
6. **AOB** (all)
7. **Closing remarks** (DFAT Assistant Director SAR)



## Annex 6 – Proposed adjustments to the Results Framework

The table below is a summary of the suggested adjustments to be made to the Results Framework, which may feed into discussions with the program partners in 2024.

Original Wording and Recommended Action	Proposed Indicator
Combine the following: 2.2.3 Partner priorities identified and supported for building Regional Power Market Trade and Development 2.2.4 Partner priorities identified and supported for enhancing regional transport connectivity	“Partner Priorities identified and supported (disaggregated by sector: regional power market trade and development / enhancing regional transport connectivity)”
Combine the following: 2.2.5 Incidence of new knowledge products informing better design of regional transport and energy projects 2.2.6 Incidence of training and networking informing agency and company policy and practice, and cross-border consultation 2.2.7 Capacity demonstrated by institutions and individuals	“Improved knowledge and capacity demonstrated by relevant institutions and individuals as a result of knowledge products, training and networking”  <i>Measurement guidance: Examples of demonstration may include better design of regional transport and energy projects, agency and company policy and practice and cross border consultation</i>
Combine the following: 2.3.3 Number and quality of, and outcomes from, contacts with Australian counterparts 2.3.4 Number and quality of, and outcomes from, regional networking contacts	“Evidence of, and outcomes from, contacts with Australian counterparts and regional networking”  <i>Measurement guidance: Provide total number of contacts, quality of contact. Provide examples of outcomes, such as changes in policy or practice.</i>



## Annex 7 – Summary of Projects per Component

### Component 1: Private sector-led projects and public-private partnerships (IFC)

Result	Recipient	Status
<b>Patenga Container Terminal PPP</b> – Support on due diligence, design and negotiation of private sector concession for the PTC.	Public Private Partnerships Authority of Bangladesh and Chittagong Port Authority	Ongoing. Due for completion late 2023
<b>South Asia Regional Power Trading</b> – Assessment of investment conditions for private sector engagement in cross-border electricity trade: Nepal & Bangladesh via India; Nepal & India; and India & Bangladesh. Delivered workshop on round the clock renewable energy in the grid, supported the South Asia Power Summit 2022. Delivered concept notes to Bangladesh and Nepal on commercially competitive renewable energy.	Bangladesh’s Power Secretary and Bangladesh Power Development Board, India Ministry of Power, Nepal Power Secretary	Ongoing
<b>InfraLEAP Temperate Controlled Logistics</b> - improving the enabling environment for private sector investment in cross border logistics in Bangladesh. Support to logistics regulatory processes, financial regulatory requirements. Seeks to identify USD 50 mil in private sector investment. Complementary work via World Bank on TCL.	Bangladesh National Logistics Development and Coordination Committee, Bangladesh Investment Development Authority	Ongoing, working toward summit in May 2024
<b>Dhaka Airport PPP</b> – Transaction Advisory Services to the GoB in the expansion of HSIA Airport, including project due diligence, drafting project documentation and supporting GoB in negotiations process.	Government of Bangladesh	Starting Oct 2023, completion Oct 2024
<b>Sri Lankan Air Divestiture</b> – Support in bid preparation for private sector takeover of SLA, and facilitation of private investment up to USD 500 mil.	Government of Sri Lanka	Ongoing.
<b>PSA Port Upstream Environmental &amp; Social Studies</b> – Support to PSA International, which works with GoB, to determine feasibility of Bay Terminal through 5 studies and presented to PSA, developed TORs for additional assessments.	PSA International, and Government of Bangladesh	Closed



## Component 2: Public Sector support for World Bank (and other) project financing (World Bank)

Result	Recipient	Status
<b>Bhutan Hydropower</b> - WB is supporting Government of Bhutan to strengthen capacity of power agencies and to plan and prepare regional hydropower and transmission line projects. Financial support to Dorjilung Hydropower project, and leadership in arranging consortium financing (USD 1.2-1.5bil), led a knowledge exchange between power executives in BBIN, and analysis on regulatory guidance on dam safety	Government of Bhutan	Ongoing (Feb 2022- Dec 2023)
<b>Nepal Civil Aviation</b> – support to Government of Nepal to identify high impact air transport investments, practices and policy changes to improve domestic and regional air connectivity and safety. Phase 1 closed with uncertainty. Focus is on Phase 2 to support establishment of Accident Investigation Unit.	Government of Nepal (initially Civil Aviation Authority, then Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation).	Ongoing May 2023 – June 2024
<b>ACCESS Programmatic ASA</b> – Supporting the World Bank ACCESS program, that improves regional trade in Bangladesh and Nepal. Convening and learning platforms and generating an evidence base. Contributes to USD 1bil program.	Governments of Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan (stage 2)	Ongoing – Jan 2023 to Aug 2024
<b>Electricity Markets of South Asia</b> – Support to South Asia governments to transition to market based trade and development of regional electricity market. Analytics and support to consensus building, support to planning of regional projects.	SA Region.	Ongoing – May 2023 0 Aug 2024
<b>Bangladesh Logistics Development</b> – Supporting GoB to improve overall logistics of Bangladesh through technical assistance and analytical support. Jointly with IFC.	National Logistics Development and Coordination Committee (NLDCC) of Bangladesh	Due to commence 2024

## Component 3: Training and Networking Services (Palladium)

Result	Recipient	Status
<b>Large Systems Training Program (LSTP)</b>	All SARIC Countries and Pakistan	Ongoing Jul 2023 – May 2024
<b>Building Blocks for Inclusive Regional Infrastructure Projects -</b>	Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives	
<b>Dam Safety Principles Training– 21 participants, held in Hobart.</b>	India, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka	Completed Oct 2023





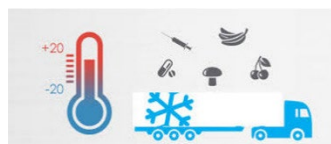
Result	Recipient	Status
Ports Tour – to be held in Thailand, 15-20 participants	Bangladesh	Due to commence Nov 2023
Power Markets training – 19 participants with additional nominations to be received	All SARIC countries	Due to commence Nov 2023-Jan 2024
Road Safety Training – in the procurement process, RFT released	TBC	Due to commence Feb-Mar 2024
Road Asset Management Training – Concept note finalised and RFT under preparation	TBC	Due to commence Mar-Apr 2024
<b>Networking events:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Australia-Bangladesh Infrastructure Partnership Potential’ in collaboration with AHC, Dhaka and Austrade</li> <li>• Consultative workshop in Dhaka on ‘Gender Mainstreaming at Land Ports- Lessons from the Indian experience’ - ICRIER and World Bank as workshop facilitators. One day workshop, followed by a networking dinner</li> </ul>	All SARIC countries	Completed
<b>Alumni Meetups: Colombo, Dhaka and Kathmandu</b>	All SARIC countries	Completed
<b>Knowledge Products:</b> SARIC Podcast – first season on inclusive infrastructure; Second series to focus on the theme of climate resilience in infrastructure	All SARIC countries	Ongoing



## Annex 8 – Case Studies

See below Case Study 1 – InfraLEAP Temperature Controlled Logistics in Bangladesh

Country	Partner	Sector	Intermediate Outcome
Bangladesh	IFC/WB	Transport, Regional connectivity	Private Sector, Capacity & Knowledge



**Temperature Controlled Logistics is the storage, transportation, and distribution of temperature-sensitive cargo.** This ensures that the temperature throughout the supply chain remains the same. It is the process of maintaining and transporting perishable goods in refrigerated vehicles. TCL are a key tool for achieving public health goals, realising economic growth and maintaining reliable nutrition around the world. The logistics sector in Bangladesh is central to the country’s ambitious goals of achieving export earnings of \$100 billion and graduation from LDC category by 2026. TCL are essential for the seamless transportation of key products across borders – food and pharmaceuticals most notably. In 2020, Bangladesh imports 800,000 metric tons of products requiring TCL services. In 2022, the total volume of products requiring TCL services, for either import or export, is estimated at 1.2 million metric tons, indicating that needs are growing as the economy recovers from the effects of COVID- 19. By 2026, the export target will be nearly USD 100B, and a core area to achieve this is logistics services, however currently, there is no market for TCL in Bangladesh.

**This project aims to improve the enabling environment for private sector investment in logistics sector including cross-border, warehouse and temperature-controlled logistics in Bangladesh.** IFC is working closely with the Bangladesh National Logistics Development and Coordination Committee (NLDCC) and its secretariat jointly with the World Bank Transport Team to: Simplify the regulatory policies and processes to facilitate establishment of cross-border and other inland container depot (ICD), TCL facilities and warehouses; Streamline regulatory requirements on equity and other entry restrictions for international logistics investors, including TCL; Support systematic integration of logistics components in the national economic zones (EZ) masterplan. World Bank is providing selected supply chains, policy and regulatory reform, and development of a Logistics Performance Monitoring Dashboard, knowledge exchange programs and secretariat support.

**The overall outcome of this work is to identify USD 50 million in private sector investment opportunities in temperature-controlled logistics,** thereby contributing to increased trade out of, and into, Bangladesh.

### Results to date:

- The institutional fragmentation in the logistics sector in Bangladesh led the government to establish a formal coordination mechanism: the National Logistics Development and Coordination Committee (NLDCC) was formed in January 2022, supported by InfraLEAP, and is “a milestone initiative in this process” (MTR Informant).
- Jointly with the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority, InfraLEAP is in the process of mapping out investors through a consultative process.
- Currently facilitating priority reform proposals through NLDCC, including initial review of logistics policy of 11 countries (including neighbouring countries).



## Case Study 2 – Bhutan Sustainable Hydropower Development Project

Country	Partner	Sector	Intermediate Outcome
Bhutan	World Bank	Energy, Regional Connectivity	Private Sector, Capacity & Knowledge



The Bhutan SHDP is a Recipient Executed (RE) activity partly funded by SARIC and by the ESMAP Trust Fund, which commenced in May 2022. The implementing agency is state-owned Druk Green Power Corporation (DGPC), which manages and operates Bhutan's hydropower assets and participates in new hydropower development. Bhutan's untapped hydro potential is expected to contribute to the healthy development of a regional power market, fuelled by renewable energy. Bhutan's estimated financing requirements for the development of 2.94 GW hydropower projects in pipeline up to 2026 is \$11 billion. The objective of the project is to strengthen the capacity of power sector agencies in Bhutan to plan and prepare regional hydropower and transmission line projects following international good practices and to support development of DHPP. This is expected to contribute to enabling the structuring of regional integration and electricity trade with India and Bangladesh.

### Results to date:

The GoBh made a formal request to the World Bank to support the financing of the construction of the Dorjilung Hydropower project, and invited World Bank to take the lead in arranging the consortium financing with other development partners for the estimated project cost of USD 1.2-1.5 billion. A financiers' conference was held in June 2023, during which ADB, JICA, EIB and two other funds expressed an interest in co-financing the project.

The activity selected consultancy firms in December 2022 to provide Technical Advisory services for two major work areas to support the preparation of Hydropower Plant and Transmission Line Projects: (i) Updating and completion of ESIA studies and (ii) technical advisory services for the update of a feasibility study of the DHPP. Preparation of the DHPP in accordance with international standards is expected to be critical in attracting new types of financing partners for hydropower in Bhutan and to help to accelerate hydropower development in the country.

In February 2023, the activity led the first sub-regional BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal) knowledge exchange in Thimpu between power sector executives. During the event, the participants agreed on a preliminary list of power sector investments to contribute to improved integration between the four countries. This new platform complements well the Power Secretaries Roundtable being held on a semi-annual basis and has allowed the executives from Power Companies to discuss in detail how to further operationalize the BBIN electricity market and overcome obstacles. The next meeting was to be hosted in Kathmandu in November 2023.

World Bank is providing an additional financing of USD 400,000 from SARIC to provide supplementary analysis for regulatory guidelines on dam safety to support their adoption. This was complemented by GoB participation in the Dam Safety Training led by Palladium (TNS Component) in Hobart Australia in October 2023.



## Case Study 3 – Building Blocks for Inclusive Regional Infrastructure (BBIRI)

Country	Partner	Sector	Intermediate Outcome
Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka	Palladium	Energy, Transport, Regional Connectivity	Capacity & Knowledge, Networking



The Building Blocks for Inclusive Regional Infrastructure (BBIRI) course is a short face to face course delivered by University of Sunshine Coast (UoSC) designed to address the foundational learning needs of private and public sector stakeholders from the energy and transport sector on a diverse range of topics including public private partnerships, ESG (Environment, Social and Governance), GEDSI (Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion), and stakeholder engagement. The course was developed following a Training Needs Assessment (TNA) conducted by Palladium in 2022, which TNA identified a need amongst stakeholders for broad based trainings that would cover a large spectrum of topics in infrastructure. Palladium collaborated with World Bank and IFC SARIC partners to develop the BBIRI short course. The UoSC was selected as the course delivery partner following a transparent selection process with criteria agreed by SARIC partners. Regular and guest lecturers for the course demonstrated relevant credentials and represented public, regulatory and private sector expertise in infrastructure, as well as PPPs, climate and gender. The TNS team selected high quality sites for study visits, including an award-winning solar farm, Australia’s first privately funded major airport, and the country’s largest greenfield CBD development project with up to \$2.5 billion in private investments.

The first BBIRI training cohort was finalised through a four-step process that entailed nominations, preliminary screening, selection of participants. Women and persons with disabilities were encouraged to apply. 22 participants from 5 countries participated in the BBIRI short course, and more than 40% of the participants were women. The first cohort was heavily represented by the public sector (20 out of a total of 22 participants). This included senior officials and decision-makers from the energy and transport infrastructure ministries, departments, regulatory authorities and utilities: including representatives from roads, railways, green energy, power, electricity and PPP departments.

Multiple quality parameters of course delivery were assessed by the team through a survey of course participants at course completion. Course participants rated the quality of short course highly on several counts, including quality of trainers, quality of training methods/pedagogy, and overall quality. All participants shared that their knowledge had improved as a result of taking the short course, and that knowledge and skills gained through BBIRI were directly relevant to their jobs. By the end of 2024, Palladium expects to see a 100-member strong TNS alumni straddling 4 courses, through invitation to participate in alumni networking events and platforms.

Follow up engagement with alumni found that a strong network of BBIRI participants has developed, with active WhatsApp groups, face to face meet ups, and an active members-only LinkedIn group. Attendance at the networking events during the MTR was strong, and there was positive feedback about not only the content of the training but the follow on networks and contacts with industry professionals in the region, and with Australian experts from USC and the guest lecturers.



## Annex 9 - Evaluation Plan

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