Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Activity: Orange Corners Bangladesh (22-0000050)

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Date	20-05-2026
SAP application number	4000006335

Contents

Key data **4**

Activity basics 4

Activity details 4

Accounting data 4

Policy data **5**

Beneficiary location **6**

Policy Appraisal **7**

Policy relevance 7

Rationale 7

Contextual analysis 7

Added value 7

Lessons learned 8

Problem analysis 8

Gender 8

Climate change 8

Cooperation, harmonisation and alignment 8

Digitalisation 8

Additional remarks (if applicable) 9

Results **10**

Private Sector Development 10

Monitoring and evaluation **11**

Monitoring 11

Evaluation 11

Finance **12**

Budget breakdown 12

Earmarking 12

Prepayments 12

Available resources 12

Key data

Activity basics

Type	Standard
Short name	Orange Corners Bangladesh
Contract party	YY Ventures Limited (30080429)
ODA	Yes
Amount EUR	453321
Start date	01-01-2023
End date	31-12-2027
Full name	Orange Corners Bangladesh
Summary	The Orange Corners Dhaka trains entrepreneurial skills to the youth and women to generate job and self-employment. The program focuses on students and businesses that create a social impact for Bangladesh. It is designed in a way so that the private sector can take over the project and make it a sustainable one.

Activity details

Date of receipt of proposal	22-09-2022
Proposal's reference number	
Budget holder	Ambassade Dhaka (8241DHA)
Limit access	No
Related activity	

Accounting data

SAP application number	4000006335
Funds center	DHA BD Private sector development contr (1701U03020007)

Policy data

Cooperation modality	Project support
Technical assistance	Not applicable
CRS code	16020 Employment creation
Policy Keywords	
Policy Markers	
Climate change: adaptation	Significant
Climate change: mitigation	Significant
Equality between men & women	Principal
Private sector development	Principal
Good Governance / participation	Principal
Explain your choices	

Beneficiary location

Beneficiary location	Country
Country	Bangladesh
Location type	
Specific location	

Policy Appraisal

Policy relevance

The 2022 Dutch policy on Foreign Trade and Development (BHOS nota) classified Bangladesh as a 'combination' country in which development cooperation, trade and investments are prioritized, and mutually reinfoce each other. Countries with this classification offer opportunities for a variety of Dutch stakeholders. The same policy note increased its focus on small and medium enterprises, start-ups, and female entrepreneurs.

This program also aligns with the Annual Plan and MACS of EKN Bangladesh: one of the objectives in Bangladesh is to stimulate opportunities for entrepreneurship, job creation and employment in Bangladesh. A special focus goes to the youth, because approx. 60 percent of the population is under the age of 35.
The Orange Corners program contributes to employment and entrepreneurship in the country in a way that is also reflected in the Bangladeshi government's aspirations in the 8th Five Year Plan to boost employment and link talent to the job market. This program strives for a better gender balance by motivating women to participate in entrepreneurship and mainstreaming a gender quotum in the program.

Rationale

The EKN aims to contribute to a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem in Bangladesh, which provides economic opportunities, skills and economic empowerment for youth. Following the business ecosystem mapping that was conducted by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) in November 2021, the EKN and RVO agreed on the intention to start an Orange Corners incubation programme in Bangladesh. By facilitating entrepreneurship, supporting soft-skills and technical skills development and creating access to finance for young entrepreneurs, Orange Corners enables youth to create their own future.
The target group of this activity are therefore Bangladeshi university graduates and young professionals between 18 to 35 years, who are passionate about solving social problems with innovative solutions. 50% of this group is female. The intervention is aimed at Dhaka, because the city has the furthest developed ecosystem for entrepreneurship, and plenty of graduate students. It is worth noting that the mapping took into account the port city of Chittagong as well - for now no activities are foreseen there.
This projects directly benefits at least 1,478 youths. The youth that is engaged in this program develop entrepreneurial skills and a portion is expected create a viable business. These new businesses contribute to creating jobs for indirect beneficiaries, and will also have a measurable social impact. The local private sector is another important stakeholder in this proposal, because the program should eventually run on funding from the private sector. This approach makes the program sustainable in the long run.

Contextual analysis

In the last 20 years, Bangladesh made significant economic progress, with GDP growing from 53.4 billion USD in 2000 to 324.2 billion USD in 2020. Next to the GDP growth rates, significant milestones were achieved in human development indicators, including school enrollment, life expectancy and infant mortality. The private sector today, however, is unable to meet the demand for young people entering the labour market (2.1 million youth enter this labour market annually). This results in a mismatch between labour supply and demand, which harms the value addition and is an oft cited reason for young Bangladeshis to migrate, risking significant brain drain in Bangladesh in a time when the country needs capable young people to meet its aspirations to attain middle-income status.
There have been various initiatives to enhance the entrepreneurial eco-system in Bangladesh, eg. empower youth and inspire innovation to mobilise Bangladesh's entrepreneurship ecosystem through government-funded projects and programs, as well as those led by corporates, educational institutions, development agencies, and independent ecosystem builders. The National ICT Policy 2009, Alternative Investment Rules 2015, and the Digital Bangladesh Agenda 2021, played an important role in creating the startup ecosystem – as well as educational institutions. Despite this progress, the ecosystem remains severely underdeveloped.

Added value

The Netherlands is well-known for its innovative and entrepreneurial culture. The Netherlands scores high on various entrepreneurial indexes. Orange Corners programmes have been rolled out in different countries in Asia and the Middle East. The OC program is a strong 'brand' in itself, which takes the experience and knowlegde of the OC programs to new countries.
Orange Corners is a public-private initiative that actively seeks the involvement of the (local) private sector. This involvement is both in-kind as well as financially. The local service provider has an active role in the acquisition of the private parties to ensure sustainability of the programme, in collaboration with the EKN and the RVO. Participants in the OC program, are actively involved in fundraising. If participants successfully collect money through crowdfunding, they can get a reduction on their loan. A part of the loan is turned into a grant (NB although the loan component is part of the overall OC programme, this appraisal is only about the incubation component of the programme).

Lessons learned
Orange Corners is active in 17 locations across Africa and the Middle East. Each program is adjusted to the recipient country. Previous programs (YY Goshti, BYLC skills programme) provided lessons learned for the next programs, in addition to the extensive mapping that was performed by RVO.
Although every program is different, experienced partners are crucial for a succesful and smooth program. Therefore, experienced partners are selected for the OC Dhaka. Another lesson learned from previous OC programs is that targeted marketing and communication can substantially contribute to promoting the activities and expose the projects better to the target groups. This will therefore be implemented in the OC Dhaka.

Problem analysis
Bangladesh currently lacks a holistic approach to improve the entrepreneurial eco-system, in which governments, institutions, NGOs, corporates, and other local service providers, collaborate to exchange skills, knowledge, and resources to create opportunities for networking, capital, and investment. Most of the programs pay insufficient attention to attracting, supporting and retaining female entrepreneurs. The Orange Corners program tries to fill this gap. In this program, the partnerships with private and public stakeholders should ensure the program's sustainability.
In addition, the analysis done by RVO highlighted a funding gap: between approx EUR 10.000 and EUR 80.000, most promising enterprises lack access to finance. The goal of the OC programme is to equip entrepreneurs with the skills and the financial track record to bridge this gap by themselves.

Gender
It can be challenging for women in Bangladesh to start their own business and become succesful entrepreneurs. Female entrepreneurs are therefore the most important target group of the proposed intervention. The goal is to strengthen women's skills, networks, confidence, and motivation to overcome social and cultural barriers related to entrepreneurship and female-led businesses. A specific interest goes to accessing finance and breaking through the traditional role of women in society as an obstacle to become a succesful entrepreneur.

Climate change
Bangladesh faces different climate challenges eg. floods, cyclones, environments disasters, rising sea levels. To solve these climate related issues it is important that the government, private sectors, development partners, academia and entrepreneurship development organisations work together to tackle environmental challenges. Although OC is not aimed at climate change directly, the program can contribute in tackling these issues.
For instance, hackathons will be organized during the project in which participants are challenged to come up with solutions for specific challenges. These challenges are fixed and identified in collaboration with stakeholders in the public and private sectors. Proposed thematic areas include:

1. Climate action
2. Clean water and sanitisation
3. Affordable and clean energy
4. Sustainable cities and communities
5. Industry innovation and infrastructure
6. Technology for social good

Cooperation, harmonisation and alignment
In this activity EKN cooperates with RVO and two Bangladeshi organisations: YY Ventures and Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center (BYLC). RVO implemented multiple Orange Corners programs throughout the world. YY Ventures already runs projects that support socially and environmentally conscious entrepreneurs in collaboration with RVO. BLYC and EKN currently work together on developing the entrepreneurial/leadership skills and professional development skills for 10,000 youth in Bangladesh. As the ecosystem mapping pointed out, there is a lack of cooperation in the Bangladesh entrepreneurship ecosystem, which is why YY Ventures and BYLC were chosen as implementing partners. During the OC program private sectors and other donor programs will also be sought out to consider alignment and cooperation.

Digitalisation
Digital technologies are included on two levels. Firstly to create program awareness, and secondly to communicate with the end-users. YY Ventures and BYLC create all the digital content (photo and video) and make use of the Orange Corners (Dhaka) website. The content is shared on various digital platforms, such as social media and the OC website. In addition to creating program awareness through digital platforms, the local service providers give online trainings and masterclasses to the end-users. The proposal does not include an analysis on the local digital ecosystem, but mentions that the youth (18-35) are active users of internet and social media. In all program activities, data security issues are taken seriously. The data privacy and security protocol developed by JPAL (2015); 'Data Security Procedures for Researchers' is applied throughout the program.

Additional remarks (if applicable)

Results

Private Sector Development

Indicators
Description how the activity contributes to this theme
Measurements:

1. Strengthening the business climate

SDG target(s): 8a, 8.1, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, 8.8, 8.10, 10.2, 17.11. Short description: In the result area 'strengthening the business climate', the approach is to strengthen the local business climate through interventions relating to infrastructure, youth employment and entrepreneurship, policy and regulation, institutional capacity building and social dialogue to strengthen MSME's within their ecosystem and improve their access to financial and other services.

Indicators
1.A. Number of companies with a supported plan to invest, trade or provide services. (IATI code XXX001)
Measurements:

- Individual result: 13
  Comment: MINBUZA-2024.364377 p.14
- Individual result: 26
  Comment:

1.F. Number of direct jobs supported in individually supported MSMEs. (IATI code XXX0006)
Measurements:

- Individual result: 107
  Comment: MINBUZA-2024.364377 p.14
- Individual result: 104
  Comment:

1.Q. Number of MSMEs that obtain financial services. (IATI code XXX0017)
Measurements:

- Individual result: 20
  Comment:

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring

The reporting on the program will be done by YYV and BYLC staff led by the MEL Officer. A detailed monitoring and evaluation framework (including beneficiary contact monitoring, activity monitoring and result monitoring) will be used as a guiding document to monitor progress and achieve results as planned and targeted. Therefore, YYV and BYLC will prepare an inception report and share it with EKN and RVO, based on the initial discussion, which will be the guiding document for the further program implementation.

The local service providers will monitor the activity and output progress by collecting performance data from the program implementation team and partner organisations, and share it monthly. It will also include the result of the social media outreach, including the growth of the channels and engagements. Moreover, the output, activity progress and impact will be shared with EKN and RVO annually for assessment. The annual report will include the program evaluation, which will be a systematic process to determine how well and to what extent the program activities and outputs met the expected results of specific objectives (outcomes) and the program's overall objective (impact). If needed, both implementing partners will take necessary adjustments or corrective steps, wherever required, to ensure the timely progress of the program activities.

In addition to the annual report, YYV and BYLC will submit an annual financial report which a registered auditor will audit. Furthermore, for internal management and quality assurance, the progress status will be shared and discussed monthly with the higher management team of YYV and BYLC.

In year 3, a final evaluation will be conducted to assess the overall performance of the set of indicators and targets and the program's impact. Moreover, a financial audit will also be carried out at the end of the program (Year 3) to assess the program's financial performance. The evaluation keeps the standard evaluation criteria to review efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability in mind and will specifically look towards the impact level, i.e., the improvement in the confidence, practice and culture of youth participation in social entrepreneurship, technical skill development and access to a supportive environment, including financial support.

Most importantly, the reports should follow the Orange Corners Procedures and Guidelines and the Monitoring & Evaluation framework.

Evaluation

Several review evaluations have been planned. The local service providers need to provide (updated) workplans every six months that set out the planned activities for the next cohort. These plans includes (but is not limited to) the training, business support, masterclasses and mentoring programme; networking and other events; it also includes a budget. The Orange Corners Steering Committee, consisting of OC representative and The EKN and must, prior to implementation, approve the delivery plans and the associated budget. **As these reports will be discussed and approved amongst the members of the Steering Committee and are not suitable for the common assessment instruments, these reports will not form part of the reporting obligations included in the contribution agreement.**

Workplan	**Needs to be delivered and discussed**
Cohort 1	Before February 1st 2022
Cohort 2	Before 1st July 2022
Cohort 3	Before February 1st 2023
Cohort 4	Before 1st July 2023
Cohort 5	Before February 1st 2024
Cohort 6	Before 1st July 2024

Finance

Budget breakdown

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
1. Human resources	52 000	52 000	52 000	10 400	10 400	176 800
2. Other costs	31 800	31 800	31 800	28 800	28 800	153 000
3. Project inception and planning	6 700	1 700	1 700	0	0	10 100
3.1 Baseline study	1 700	1 700	1 700	0	0	5 100
3.2 Branding & office set-up	5 000	0	0	0	0	5 000
4. Project activity pre-incubation	11 800	11 800	11 800	0	0	35 400
4.1 Hackathons	10 000	10 000	10 000	0	0	30 000
4.2 Campus ambassador programs	1 800	1 800	1 800	0	0	5 400
5. Project activity incubation	9 070	9 070	9 070	0	0	27 210
6. Project activity post-incubation	3 200	3 200	3 200	0	0	9 600
Subtotal	114 570	109 570	109 570	39 200	39 200	412 110
Contingency reserve 5%	5 729	5 479	5 479	1 960	1 960	20 606
Overhead 5%	5 729	5 479	5 479	1 960	1 960	20 606
Grand total	126 027	120 527	120 527	43 120	43 120	453 321

Earmarking

Funds will be earmarked.

Prepayments

- Following the prepayment decision tree, this project is not eligible for lumpsum payments. Therefore, payments will be registered as prepayments.
- Considering the positive experiences with both partners involved and their solid financial management systems, prepayments of up to 95% are considered justifiable.
- No audit will be required for this project due to the limited size of the contribution. Prepayments will be justified through approval of annual financial reports.

Available resources

	EUR
Implementing organisation's own contribution	0
Firm commitments by other donors (for each donor)	N/A
Dutch contribution	453 321
Total available resources	453 321
Budget needed	453 321
Still to be financed	0
Soft commitments by other donors (for each donor)	N/A
Uncovered balance	0