

THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PARADOX

How World Bank and ADB advisory services are 'assisting' dependency on fossil gas



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on fossil gas**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The World Bank Group (WBG) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have both announced restrictions to investments in fossil gas, including that they will cease upstream support for the gas industry. But:



A paradox persists in the WBG and ADB's continued investments in technical assistance for gas-related projects – in effect creating a loophole for further financing of fossil gas.



The WBG has allocated almost \$200m in technical assistance for the gas related sector following the Paris Agreement, spanning from 2016 to August 2023. Across 14 countries, predominantly focusing on extraction, supply, decision-making and governance.



The ADB committed nearly \$11m for the gas-related sector during the period from 2016 to 2021. The ADB's technical assistance for gas has more than doubled compared to the period preceding the Paris Agreement (2010–2015), during which investments amounted to \$4.5m.



Despite its smaller financial scale compared to other loans and grants, technical assistance should not be overlooked or underestimated. It has a significant impact on development trajectories by providing vital expertise, support and guidance that has a disproportionate impact on a country's policy and strategic direction.



MDBs promote gas as a 'transition' or 'bridge' fuel, but this is a false narrative. MDBs' persistent provision to gas-related projects through technical assistance can intensify pressing environmental, social, and climate impacts, leading to potential fossil gas infrastructure lock-in problems, and have severe consequences for global energy transition efforts, slowing the pace of emissions reductions in the fight against the climate crisis.

Recommendations for aligning MDBs' technical assistance with the Paris Agreement's goals and avoiding support for fossil gas projects include:



Use technical assistance to support countries to enhance their NDCs;



Direct technical assistance away from fossil fuels and facilitate an inclusive and just sustainable renewable energy transition;



Support ambitious emission reductions targets and foster a just and equitable energy transition;



Ensure all technical assistance for the energy sector is approved at Board level;



Ensure technical assistance processes and documentation are publicly available and subject to meaningful, gender-responsive public consultation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The urgent need to tackle climate change has brought the operations of Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) under intense scrutiny. The Paris Agreement's critical goal of limiting the global temperature rise to below 1.5°C means the MDBs face the formidable challenge of transforming their operations and strategies. This reform should entail a resolute shift away from fossil fuels.

A paradox persists in the World Bank Group (WBG)'s and Asian Development Bank (ADB)'s commitment to align with the Paris Agreement and their continued provision of technical assistance for gas-related projects. Gas is a fossil fuel and, at present, it is the most rapidly expanding contributor to CO₂ emissions among fossil fuels, responsible for over **50% of the recent increase in the past five years**. Opting for gas as a transition fuel instead of sustainable renewable energy as an energy source will result in significant adverse environmental impacts and push communities living in climate-vulnerable countries perilously close to climate catastrophe.

This paper analyses MDBs' alignment with the Paris Agreement, focusing on WBG and ADB technical assistance for fossil gas-related sectors. The WBG has allocated almost \$200m in technical assistance for the gas related sector since the Paris Agreement came into effect in 2016, while the ADB has committed nearly \$11m for the gas-related sector from 2016 to 2021.

Technical assistance is an often-overlooked facet of MDBs' operations, and often slips through the net due to the relatively limited size of the overall portfolios, which also means that the investments do not require approval from the Board. But this ignores the pivotal role technical assistance can play in shaping countries' energy strategies, paving the way for future investments. The WBG and the ADB could focus their technical assistance in the areas of the just energy transition and **sustainable finance**, as well as in risk and opportunity assessments. It is crucial that MDBs immediately reassess and re-evaluate the scope of the technical support they extend to countries in order to align their operations with the Paris Agreement and the urgent need to decarbonise their operations.

But there are no dedicated efforts to halt technical assistance for the fossil gas-related sector. MDBs have taken advantage of loopholes to support fossil fuels through technical assistance This includes claims of **emissions reduction from existing gas infrastructure**¹ and touting 'efficiency' while on the other side **actively backing gas projects** at downstream level. The MDBs also assert that gas remains an indispensable 'transition' fuel for ensuring energy access and reliability. Furthermore, technical assistance faces **criticism for being conditional** and responding to the policies and approaches of the financing institution rather than the client country.

The paper includes case studies from Bangladesh, Vietnam and Pakistan. The analysis draws on reflections from civil society and affected communities' experience of MDBs' gas projects and related technical assistance. By identifying existing gaps, challenges, and opportunities, the paper provides recommendations to enhance the role of MDBs in accelerating the shift to renewable energy and supporting global decarbonisation in line with the Paris Agreement.

2. WBG AND ADB TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO FOSSIL GAS OVERVIEW

WBG Technical Assistance is designed to provide **support and guidance** to its member countries to achieve development goals. According to the WBG, knowledge transfer through technical assistance should align with the developmental aspirations of countries, including their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and Long-Term Strategies.

According to the **World Bank's Technical Assistance Operation Manual**, technical assistance covers the activities of both the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD, the World Bank's middle income country arm) and the International Development Association (IDA, the World Bank's low income country arm). This assistance involves the IBRD and IDA acting either independently or as managers of trust funds financed by various donors.

The International Finance Corporation (IFC), the World Bank's private sector arm, also provides technical assistance. According to the IFC, advisory services are an important part of **its strategy to create markets and mobilise private investment**. Through this work, the IFC's technical assistance services aim to help companies attract investors, enter new markets, and improve operational performance or standards. They also help governments develop public-private partnerships and promote reforms that encourage private investment.

ADB Technical Assistance is also designed to **facilitate** the planning, financing, and implementation of development projects and programmes. According to the ADB, its purpose is to assist Developing Member Countries (DMCs) in enhancing their capacities and optimising development resource utilisation.

Table 1.0: Comparative Overview of Technical Assistance (TA) Types by MDB

MDBs	Technical Assistance Type	Description
WBG	TA Components	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expert guidance integrated within lending operations. Assists in project development and implementation funded through loans and credits.
	TA Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Execution of distinct projects exclusively funded through loans and credits.
	IFC Technical Advisory Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support companies in attracting investors and entering new markets, and assist governments in establishing public-private partnerships and private investment reforms.
ADB	Transaction Technical Assistance (TRTA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligned with ADB-financed projects, focusing on project readiness, capacity building, and policy advice. Can involve facilitating public-private partnership projects.
	Knowledge and Support TA (KSTA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not necessarily linked to ADB-funded projects. Encompasses capacity development, policy advice and research, contributing to government policies and strategies.

Source: WBG, ADB and compiled sources by researcher.

3. WHY MDBS SHOULD AVOID PROMOTING GAS THROUGH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The promotion of fossil gas through technical assistance exacerbates pressing environmental and climate impacts, leading to potential long-term carbon intensive energy lock-in challenges. In the context of energy transition, for example, the WBG [Climate Change Action Plan 2021-2025](#) and the ADB's 2021 [Energy Policy](#) promote fossil gas as a cleaner alternative to coal. But this is misleading as [gas is a fossil fuel with a significantly underestimated climate impact](#). At present, it is the most rapidly expanding contributor to CO₂ emissions among fossil fuels, responsible for over 50% of the increase in the past five years.

Why is Fossil Gas a Problem?



Expanding fossil gas infrastructure hinders the energy transition, leading to [carbon lock-in](#) and stifling the adoption of clean, renewable, and affordable technologies.



Fossil gas is highly polluting due to significant [methane leaks](#) during its processing, transport, and utilisation. Methane has a much stronger heat-trapping capacity than CO₂, with a climate impact [83–86 times greater over 20 years](#).



Fossil gas is often promoted as a cleaner alternative to coal but [emits more emissions](#) than is commonly attributed to it. It is the fastest-growing source of CO₂ emissions among fossil fuels, contributing to [over 50% of the recent increase in the past five years](#).



Investing in gas infrastructure [risks stranded assets](#) as the shift to low-carbon alternatives speeds up, [creating financial challenges](#) for governments and communities. Fossil gas infrastructure is designed for a [30–40 year lifespan](#), effectively locking countries into a carbon-intensive energy development approach.



Fossil gas development exacerbates [environmental, climate and social impacts](#), polluting air and water, affecting land, [biodiversity](#), and ecosystems, as well as the health and livelihood of [local](#) communities.

Both the WBG and the ADB have announced that they have ceased upstream support for the gas industry and introduced restrictions to support mid- and downstream gas. These commitments include support through technical assistance, yet the impact is mixed. Despite this commitment, the WBG has provided nearly \$200m in technical assistance towards gas projects since 2016. The continued provision of technical assistance to gas-related projects has serious consequences for global energy transition efforts, slowing the pace of emissions reductions in the fight against the climate crisis. The ADB provided nearly \$11m in technical assistance for gas projects from 2016 to 2021, when the new Energy Policy came into effect which included restrictions on gas financing, but nothing since. This gives cautious hope that the ADB is phasing out financing for gas projects through technical assistance, however, the ADB has since funded gas projects directly.

While the amount of finance for technical assistance may appear relatively low when compared with other types of loans and grants, it should not be overlooked or underestimated. Technical assistance substantially shapes development trajectories by providing expertise, support, and guidance. For example, technical assistance can serve as an essential conduit for informing governments about perceived directions of growth and the development of the energy sector. Technical assistance can therefore have a disproportionate impact as it plays a pivotal role in shaping a country's overarching policies and strategic positioning.

By extending such support to gas-related projects, MDBs are reinforcing the viability and granting relevance or “[new social licence](#)” of fossil fuel development rather than facilitating the much needed shift towards cleaner energy transitions. Within this scenario, technical assistance can underscore the ‘relevance’ of gas in the power sector’s development, particularly during the critical energy transition phase. This, in turn, can direct future investments in the energy sector towards gas. Moreover, it significantly stimulates long-term demand for fossil gas.

MDBs like the WBG and the ADB must stop directly or indirectly incentivising fossil gas projects through technical assistance. Rapidly reducing carbon emissions is a pressing global concern, [and is particularly crucial for developing countries facing rising energy demands](#). Supporting the expansion of fossil gas through technical assistance is creating dependency on a carbon-intensive energy source that is exacerbating emissions that fuel the climate crisis. This undermines international and country-level climate targets and disproportionately affects developing countries, intensifying their vulnerability to climate-induced challenges.

By incentivising and extending support towards gas-related projects through technical assistance, MDBs are perpetuating an unsustainable energy trajectory, hindering the deployment of clean and renewable energy solutions, and hampering the ability of developing nations to transition effectively.

4. Data Analysis of WBG and ADB technical assistance for fossil gas post-Paris Agreement

The WBG and the ADB have provided notable funding for fossil gas over the past decade. [Between 2013 and 2021](#), the WBG approved approximately \$12.7bn for gas projects² and the ADB nearly \$5.1bn.

Between 2016 and August 2023, following the Paris Agreement, our research shows that the WBG³ provided \$199,03m (almost \$200 million) in technical assistance to 14 countries (See Appendix 1)⁴, predominantly focusing on extraction, supply, decision-making and governance.

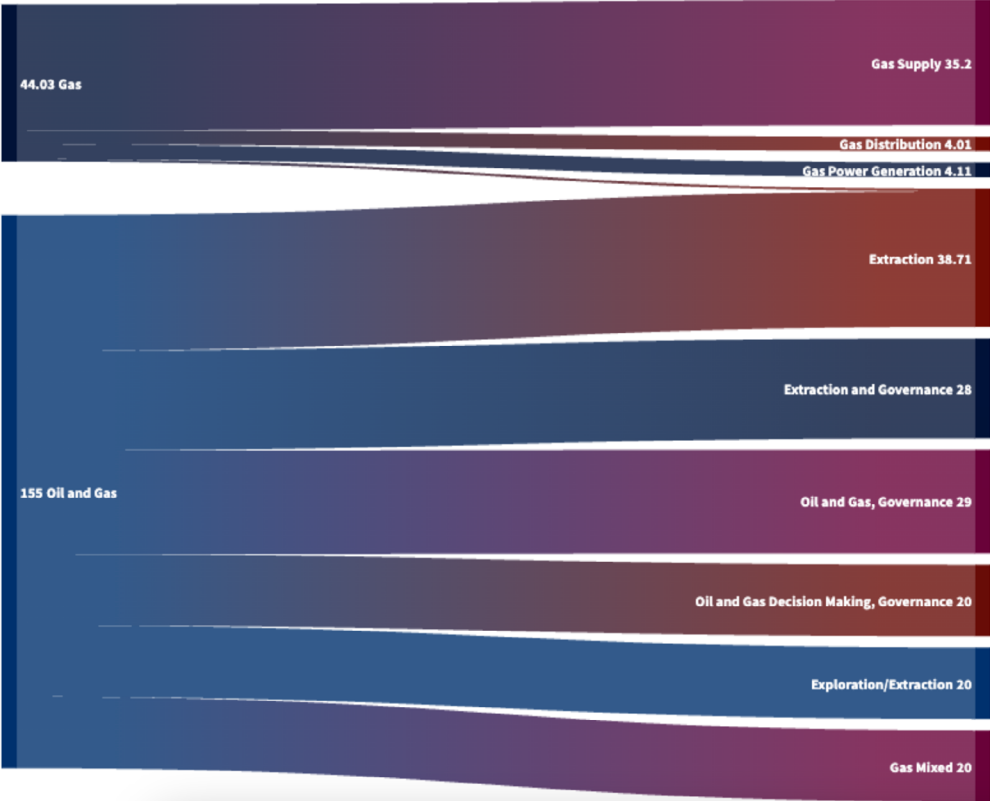
See Figure 1 and 2 for the distribution of technical assistance for gas per MDB, broken down by sub categories in order of investment size.

From the Paris Agreement until 2020, the ADB had funded fossil fuels, primarily gas, worth at least [\\$4.9bn](#), according to analysis by Oil Change International. This excludes financing through financial intermediaries but includes finance for technical assistance.

From 2016 to 2021, until the new Energy Policy came into effect, the ADB funded a total of \$10.6m towards technical assistance, most of which was designated for the gas sector alone⁵. However, our research found that ADB’s technical assistance for gas has more than doubled compared to the period preceding the Paris Agreement (2010–2015), during which disbursements amounted to \$4.5m.⁶

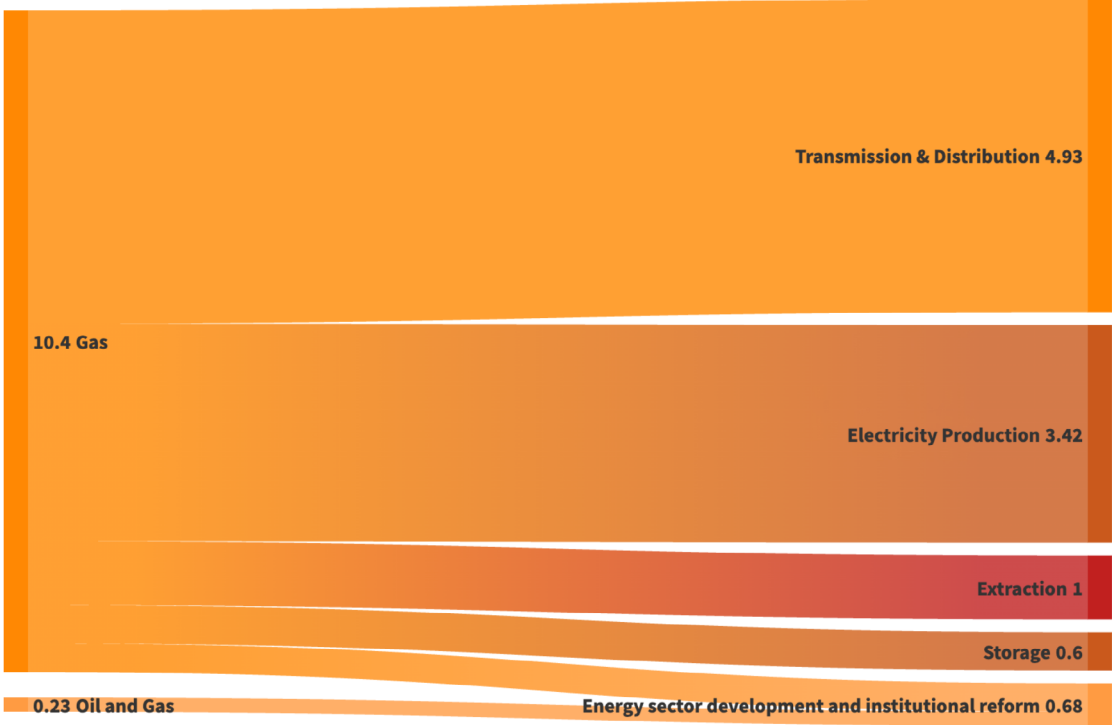
In project documentation, the ADB often justifies support for fossil gas technical assistance on the basis of its potential to address climate change, even though fossil gas is harmful for the climate. In Pakistan, for example, according to the ADB’s project documentation for the [Gas Storage Development Systems technical assistance](#), approved in 2021, part of the objectives are to tackle climate change and build climate and disaster resilience.

Figure 1: Post-Paris Agreement Technical Assistance for Fossil Gas: World Bank (2016– August 2023) – (Unit: \$ million)



Source: World Bank Group Project and Operations Database, IFC Disclosure, Public Finance for Energy Database, Oil Change International), compiled data from researcher.

Figure 2 - Post-Paris Agreement Technical Assistance for Fossil Gas: ADB (2016-2021) – (Unit: \$ million)



Source: Asian Development Bank technical assistance (ADB and Public Finance for Energy Database), updated data from researcher. Notes: The ADB's technical assistance data pertains specifically to fossil fuel development between 2016 and 2021, encompassing gas, oil, and gas-related projects.

Table 2.0: How the MDBs could optimise Technical Assistance to align with the Paris Agreement and become transformative

Noncompliant	Paris Aligned	Transformative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⦿ Technical assistance consultation is a tick box exercise that only cursorily engages civil society and affected communities. ⦿ MDBs continue to provide technical assistance for gas and other fossil fuels at all levels, including upstream, midstream, and downstream. ⦿ MDBs provide technical assistance that supports the implementation of less ambitious NDCs that still include fossil fuels and false solutions* as part of their climate actions. ⦿ MDBs extend technical assistance to support the abatement of existing gas power generation (and other fossil fuels) while simultaneously supporting the expansion of gas development. ⦿ MDBs provide technical assistance to actively shape policies and establish an enabling environment aimed at artificially lowering gas costs, thereby enabling it to compete with renewable energy sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⦿ Technical assistance consultation processes with civil society and affected communities are meaningful, accessible, transparent and accountable. ⦿ MDBs proactively cease providing technical assistance for fossil gas-related projects across upstream, midstream, and downstream levels. ⦿ MDBs actively provide technical assistance to enhance and strengthen the enabling environment through policy and regulation, as well as institutional capacity-building, to accelerate the transition to renewable energy. ⦿ MDBs actively offer technical assistance to help client countries increase the ambition of their NDCs, aligning them with a 1.5°C scenario. ⦿ MDBs provide technical assistance to develop policies and create an enabling environment that supports the competitiveness of renewable energy sources. ⦿ MDBs actively offer technical assistance to help client countries increase the ambition of their NDCs, aligning them with a 1.5°C scenario. ⦿ MDBs provide technical assistance to develop policies and create an enabling environment that supports the competitiveness of renewable energy sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⦿ Technical assistance responds to the development priorities of the poorest and most vulnerable communities, including women and Indigenous peoples, aimed at achieving energy access ⦿ MDBs actively provide technical assistance to support the implementation of enhanced or reformed NDCs in client countries. These NDCs focus on clean and renewable energy while explicitly excluding gas and all forms of fossil fuels, unproven expensive technology, and false solutions* that prolong the lifetime operation of fossil power generation. ⦿ MDBs provide technical assistance to create, attract, or support truly just energy transition initiatives and funding in the client countries. ⦿ MDBs offer technical assistance for achieving deep and thorough decarbonisation in commercial grid and captive power generation.

Notes: *Unproven and expensive technologies encompassing CCUS (Carbon Capture, Utilisation, and Storage); supercritical or ultra supercritical technology; coal gasification. While false solutions encompass Biomass, Ammonia, and Hydrogen co-firing.

Source: Recourse Analysis

WBG and ADB Technical Assistance and lack of adherence to the Paris Agreement

Both the WBG and the ADB committed to align with the Paris Agreement by 1 July 2023 for most of their operations. Both the WBG's methodology and the ADB's guidance (not publicly disclosed) build on a set of joint MDB principles for Paris Alignment, however, disappointingly these do not categorically exclude financing for gas. It is therefore unlikely that MDB Paris alignment will have any significant impact on the MDBs' gas portfolios. For instance, the WB provided TA to Bangladesh's gas sector only a few weeks after the bank's deadline to be Paris Aligned⁷, potentially exerting unfavourable outcomes on policies, regulations, governance, and institutional capacity.

The Energy and Extractives Sector Note on "Applying the World Bank Group Paris Alignment Assessment Methods", April 2023, reveals ambiguities in the WB's approach to align with the Paris Agreement. The WB outlines its assessment methods for various activities, including technical assistance. While the document attempts to balance alignment and non-alignment with climate commitments, several key problems can be identified.

The ADB's [Operations Manual \(OM\)](#) policies and procedures on technical assistance trigger critical concerns. The President, Vice-Presidents, Heads of Departments, and Offices have the authority to approve technical assistance up to \$5m, while the Director General of the Independent Evaluation Department can approve up to \$750,000. The Board of Directors plays a limited role in ADB's technical assistance procedures, primarily dealing with it as [an exception to or deviation from an ADB policy or if it involves an unusual obligation under a co-financing agreement](#).

Establishing [a specific amount, threshold, or level of approval authority](#) may result in smaller projects slipping through without comprehensive review and institutional alignment, thereby undermining climate objectives. These provisions for technical assistance that deviate from standard ADB policies are cause for concern because they open the door to support for the fossil gas sector, especially where gas is considered a 'relatively green transition fuel'. All technical assistance projects need scrutiny and oversight, regardless of their scale. The ADB must ensure all [technical assistance for fossil fuel projects is approved by the Board](#), and all gaps in the ADB's energy policy are closed to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement.

5. LACK OF TRANSPARENCY AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION

There is a pressing need for enhanced transparency and meaningful public consultation, related to MDBs' provision of technical assistance. Lack of transparency and accountability has far-reaching implications for effective and equitable energy governance. Meaningful public participation [is an essential aspect](#) of inclusive decision-making in development. But there is little evidence that technical assistance projects involve effective consultations with affected communities and related stakeholders, sidelining their concerns and rights to inclusive and sustainable development.

Meaningful public participation should involve affected communities, women, vulnerable groups, indigenous populations, and other relevant parties. This engagement should extend beyond mere feedback solicitation, integrating the inputs into technical assistance planning and decision-making processes. A well-informed public and transparent decision-making process for technical assistance is indispensable for anticipating and redirecting investments toward cleaner and more sustainable energy alternatives.

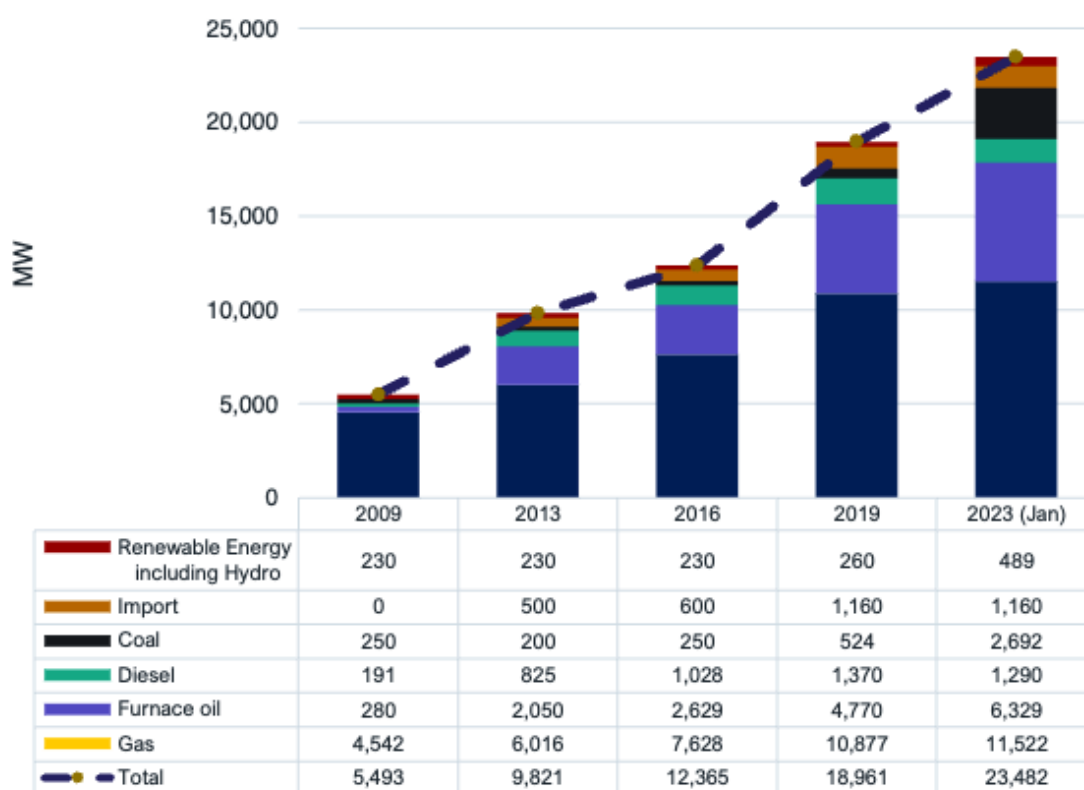
6. CASE STUDIES

A. Bangladesh

Bangladesh's power sector is among the most fossil fuel reliant in Asia, accounting for 98% of the energy mix. In 2021, gas accounted for 68% of the country's primary energy consumption. In 2022 gas power plants contributed over half of the total energy mix.

Continued reliance on gas comes with critical climate, environmental, health, and economic costs. The oil and gas sector is Bangladesh's most significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. In 2021, methane leakages in the oil and gas value chain, 25 times more potent than CO₂ in trapping heat, resulted in an estimated 257 kilotons of emissions, equivalent to roughly 7.7m tons of CO₂.

Figure 3: Bangladesh Power Capacity and Energy Mix, 2009–January 2023



Source: IEEFA, Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB)

Over the last 15 years, Bangladesh's electricity sector has experienced rapid growth, primarily shaped by the government's strategy to address energy security concerns. By 2023, the country's energy capacity was poised to reach nearly 23.5GW, marking a nearly fivefold increase from the 5.4GW capacity recorded in 2009. This substantial expansion of Bangladesh's electricity sector is closely intertwined with the remarkable growth of its dominant gas-energy sector. During the period from 2009 to 2023, the capacity of the gas energy sector in Bangladesh surged by over 400%.

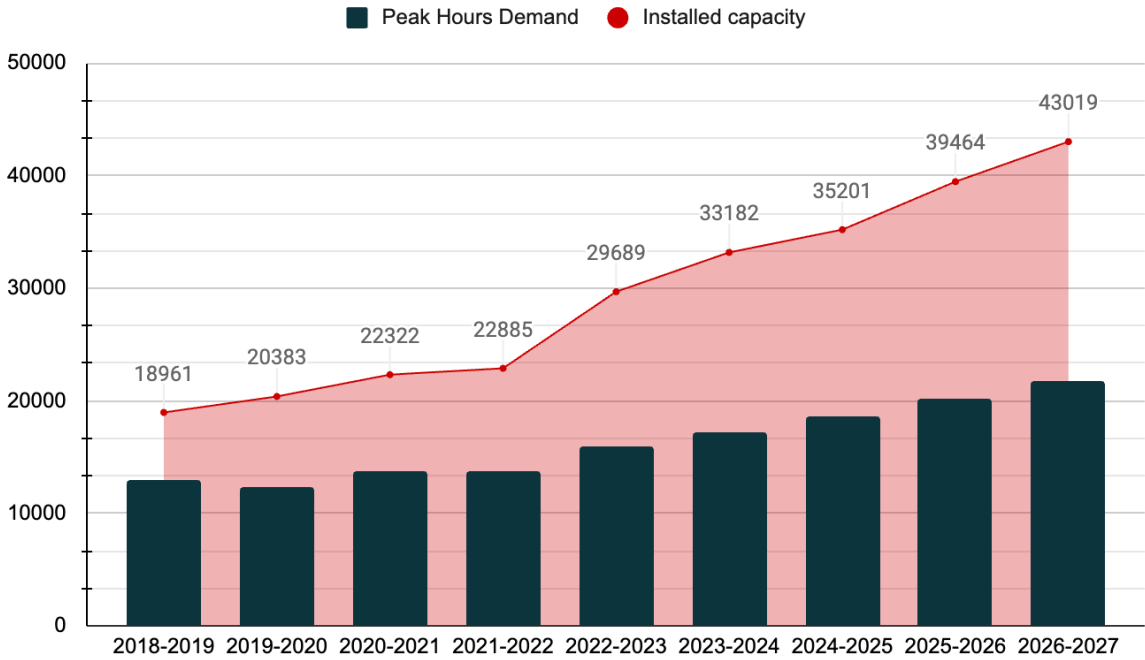
Table 3.0: Bangladesh Planned Investment for Gas Infrastructure

Bangladesh Planned Investment for Gas Infrastructure (US\$ billions)			
1	Power Plants	Proposed	10.4
		Under construction	1.9
2	Pipelines	Proposed	1.9
		Under construction	0.3
3	Terminals	Proposed	2.1
		Under construction	0
Total			16.6

Source: Global Energy Monitor. 2021. *Asia Gas Lock-In*

Amidst the ongoing expansion of gas infrastructure and new power plants in Bangladesh, the country is grappling with a significant electricity oversupply. In 2022, Bangladesh's power sector had a total capacity of 22,512MW, yet the peak electricity demand only reached 14,782MW. A substantial portion of the capacity, 7,730MW or approximately 34.3%, remained vastly underutilised.

Figure 6. Supply and Demand of Power Sector in Bangladesh (2021–2027)



Source: Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB)

Persisting in constructing gas power plants in Bangladesh would exacerbate the already pressing issue of overcapacity. The country is also grappling with an **insufficient gas supply from its own sources**, which adds to the challenge. This situation places a significant financial burden on the government as it is forced to **pay capacity charges** even when these gas plants are idle, adding to the country's growing debt. By 2027, Bangladesh is anticipated to face a substantial gap between energy supply and demand, resulting in an oversupply rate of approximately 50%. There is a significant risk that these projects will become stranded assets as they become financially unviable.

ADB Technical Assistance Case Study: Bangladesh

Bangladesh has been a member of the ADB since 1973. Over these five decades, the ADB has provided **\$21.19bn in cumulative loans and grants to Bangladesh**. Approximately \$6.50bn or roughly 21% of the total portfolio has been allocated to the energy sector.

This includes Bangladesh's energy development, which has grown heavily dependent on gas. The ADB has backed three gas projects in Bangladesh, totalling \$868mn, in direct investments since the Paris Agreement. These include a \$167m loan for the Gas Infrastructure and Efficiency Improvement Project in 2016, \$500m for the Rupsha 800-Megawatt Combined Cycle Power Plant in 2018, and \$200m for the Reliance Bangladesh Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and Power Project (Meghnaghat gas plant) in 2020.

Bangladesh ranks third among countries receiving ADB financing for gas projects from 2016 to 2020, trailing only Indonesia and Azerbaijan. This raises concerns about the ADB's commitment to supporting global decarbonisation and sustainable economic development, particularly given Bangladesh's significant overcapacity issues.

Bangladesh has consistently received the ADB technical assistance both before and after the Paris Agreement. In the five years before the Paris Agreement, ADB funded two technical assistance projects totalling over \$1.2m in Bangladesh: \$225,000 for "Tariff Reform and Inter-sectoral Allocation of Gas" in 2010; and \$1m for the "Bangladesh Gas Transmission and Distribution Development Investment Program" in 2013.

Since the Paris Agreement, the ADB has directed \$2.4m to technical assistance for gas. The largest share of \$2m for the "Sustainable and Resilient Energy Sector Facility in Bangladesh", has an aim to "improve performance of the country's energy sector through technical, policy and capacity development support for investment projects in power and gas sectors."

Table 4.0. ADB Technical Assistance for Gas in Bangladesh After Paris Agreement

No	Project	Year	Project Description	Amount	Mechanism	Sector	Recipients
1	Khulna 800 MW LNG Based Power Plant Project	2016	The Government of Bangladesh requested the Asian Development Bank to provide a small-scale project preparatory technical assistance (TA) to help prepare the Khulna 800 MW LNG Based Power Plant Project. The TA will support the due diligence and preparatory work for the ensuing project	\$225,000 \$200,000 (Supplementary)	Grants	Fossil Gas	Government of Bangladesh
2	Sustainable and Resilient Energy Sector Facility in Bangladesh	2020	The technical assistance (TA) facility will support the Government of Bangladesh during 2020–2022 to improve the performance of the country's energy sector through technical, policy and capacity development support for investment projects in power and gas sectors. During this period, the ADB energy portfolio in Bangladesh is expected to increase by \$1.7bn, equivalent to the current ADB portfolio developed during 2015–2020.	\$1,000,000+ \$1,000,000 (supplementary)	Grant	Fossil Gas	Government of Bangladesh

Analysis of Bangladesh Technical Assistance

Case: Khulna 800 MW LNG Based Power Plant Project Technical Assistance and Supplementary Technical

In 2016, the ADB approved \$200,000 and further on an additional \$225,000 in [technical assistance](#) for one of Bangladesh's largest gas power plant projects, the Khulna 800MW LNG-Based Power Plant. The primary purpose of the technical assistance was to support due diligence and preparatory work for the forthcoming project.

Despite the project status now being marked as 'closed' on the ADB's website, there is a conspicuous lack of information concerning these technical assistance components. Crucially, safeguard documents, evaluation reports, related publications, and a technical assistance report are absent.

The only publicly available document is an [initial poverty and social analysis \(IPSA\)](#), – published two months after the initial request for technical assistance was approved. The IPSA serves as an initial assessment of the potential socioeconomic impacts, both positive and negative, of the project on affected individuals. This document delves into the background and relevance of technical assistance and what aspects it can address. It covers various topics, including a review of poverty impact and social dimensions, underscoring their close connection to limited energy access.

The Khulna LNG Project: Gender and Engagement

The ADB classifies the Khulna LNG projects as having “some gender elements”. Given the lack of project documentation, it is difficult to adequately assess the basis for this statement and its impact. The only indication is in the IPSA, which makes assumptions that any increase in electricity supply will automatically benefit women, and therefore rejects the need to identify specific gender measures: “No specific measure is explored at this moment for differential gender requirements as women are not particularly advantaged or disadvantaged from the project, though there will be indirect benefits to women as a result of enhanced power supply.”

While meaningful participation is supposed to occur during the whole process, in line with Bangladesh regulations and ADB Safeguards Policy Statement 2009, there have been concerns from Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) about limited opportunities to engage and lack of information disclosure. CSOs and local communities need to be adequately involved in consultations related to technical assistance or the project in general. The lack of transparency, including no publicly available safeguards documents, evaluation, or related documentation on the project's website is particularly concerning.

“So far, there is a glaring and alarming absence of meaningful engagement in every facet of MDBs’ project implementation and a shocking void regarding technical assistance. It is profoundly disconcerting to witness how MDBs continue to throw their weight behind fossil gas projects when Bangladesh remains stagnant in its energy transition efforts, mired in high dependence on fossil fuels. We cannot raise our concerns much. These problematic processes and projects keep repeating because the decision-making process is not inclusive.”

Hasan Mehedi
Chief Executive, CLEAN (Coastal Livelihood and Environmental Action Network)
Bangladesh

Notably, the ADB emphasises in the IPSA that expanding access to gas and electricity supports sustained economic growth and poverty reduction. However, the document overlooks the risks of using gas as an energy source, including its volatility risks. For example, research by Bloomberg shows that the costs for renewable energy are consistently decreasing, while costs for gas continue to rise. Opting for a path that prioritises renewable energy development over gas, in alignment with the Paris Agreement, would reduce costs and improve electricity access for impoverished and vulnerable consumers, especially in the longer term. Although poverty targeting is mentioned in IPSA, there is a notable absence of a direct link between improving energy supply and poverty reduction. This contradicts the initial justification for choosing gas for poverty reduction.

Concerningly, the ADB labels this project as promoting “clean energy”: “The impact of the TA will be improved readiness in implementing clean energy projects”. This is greenwashing, given that the focus is on a LNG power plant, thus prioritising fossil gas over renewable energy⁸. The development of fossil gas can impede the integration of renewable energy into the energy mix and impedes Bangladesh’s ability to increase its renewable energy share.

B. Vietnam

Vietnam’s government recently unveiled its Power Development Plan 8, outlining a substantial expansion of gas energy. By 2030, a significant development is anticipated in power generation, with domestic and imported LNG to play a “pivotal role”. These sources are projected to contribute a total installed capacity of 37.33GW, constituting 24.8% of the overall energy capacity. This represents a remarkable fourfold increase compared to the 2020 capacity, which stood at approximately 9GW.

However, adding more fossil gas, including LNG, through the energy sector reform does not address the climate crisis. Fossil gas is a carbon-intensive fossil fuel, and embracing it will tether Vietnam to an energy system with high greenhouse gas emissions and hazardous pollution. Furthermore, this approach diverts significant and crucial public funding away from the vital investment in sustainable and renewable alternatives. The volatility of LNG prices on the spot market further compounds the problem, contributing to elevated fuel costs and impeding countries’ transition towards sustainable energy security.

The WBG and its private sector arm, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), are continuing to support fossil gas and LNG build-out in Vietnam as part of a so-called “renewable energy transition”, even after the Paris Agreement.

In 2018 and 2019, the WBG supported technical assistance to facilitate Vietnam’s acceleration of importing LNG to meet swiftly escalating energy demands. The primary aim of this was to enable Vietnam’s strategy of importing LNG to address its rapidly growing energy demand. This strategy involved both government and private sector participation. While the Ministry of Industry and Trade (MOIT) spearheaded the request for technical assistance and served as the primary counterpart for the WBG, other key stakeholders, including EVN, PVN, PV Gas⁹, and various public and private entities were also engaged.

The 2018–2022 World Bank Country Partnership Framework for Vietnam (the strategy that determines WBG support for Vietnam) contributed to locking Vietnam into an energy system that relies on fossil gas and LNG. It even explicitly supported Vietnam’s Gas Sector Strategy through its technical assistance efforts, including financing the Vietnam Roadmap for Gas Market Development, extending its implementation horizon to 2035.

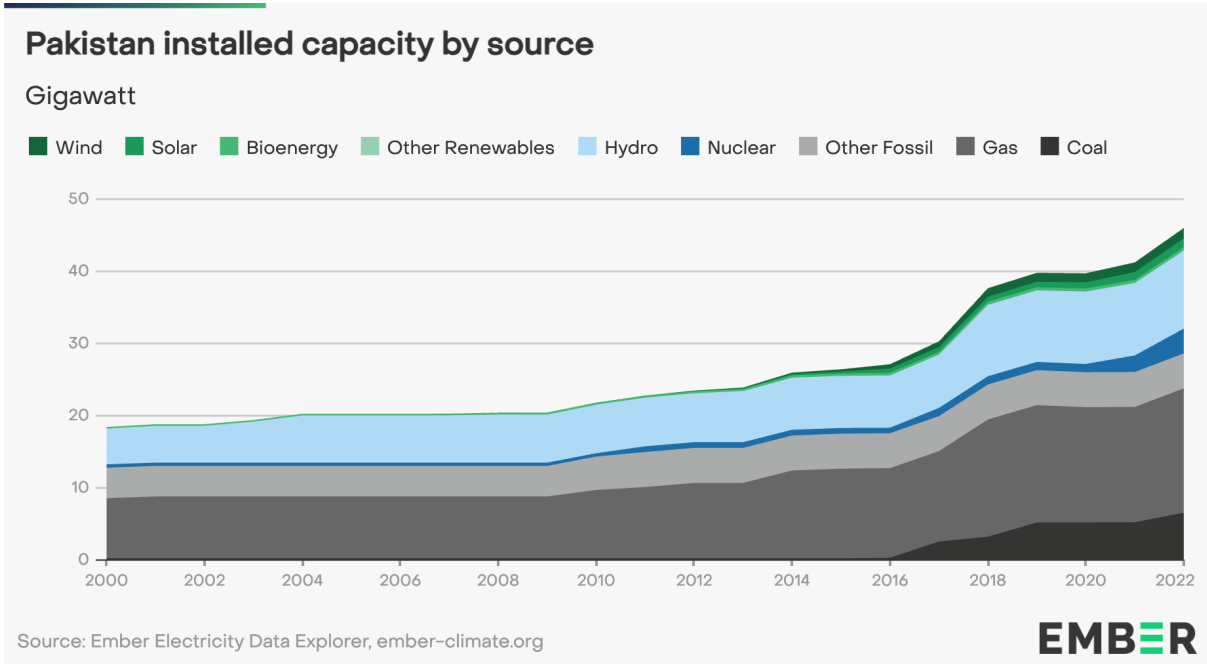
The WBG strategy and technical assistance were underpinned by domestic production outlooks for 2018–2019, indicating that Vietnam would need significant LNG imports within the ensuing 5–10 years. This would require an investment of at least \$7–9bn in LNG import infrastructure. The technical assistance specifically “provided detailed analysis addressing the constraints on LNG

investment identified in the Maximising Finance for Development (MFD) report”, thereby serving as a catalyst in attracting LNG import infrastructure. In this way it also serves as an enabler for the massive expansion of gas power plants.

C. Pakistan

Pakistan's power generation landscape is still largely dependent on thermal power, currently contributing more than half of power capacity, followed by large hydro power.

Figure 7: Pakistan Installed Capacity by Source



In 2022, gas-powered installed capacity held a 33.5% share of Pakistan's energy mix. This included 23.5% of Regasified Liquefied Natural Gas and 8.5% of gas. The reliance on thermal power also means that Pakistan's LNG demand is projected to nearly triple by 2030 as domestic gas production declines.

In 2015, Pakistan commenced its imports of LNG, yet the escalating reliance on this energy source has now evolved into a formidable problem. The reliance on gas followed by extreme gas price volatility causes energy security problems and adds to the financial crisis in the country's energy sector.

ADB's Technical Assistance and Pakistan's Fossil Gas Sector

In 2021, the ADB provided technical assistance to Pakistan amounting to \$600,000 for the fossil gas related sector: Pakistan: Gas Storage Development Systems.

This technical assistance focuses on three key aspects: to analyse and recommend gas storage modalities and options in Pakistan; developing a policy and regulatory framework for gas storage facilities; and to provide guidance on transaction models, financial structures, and development plans for the country's inaugural gas storage facility.



“ADB’s support for Pakistan’s gas sector missed a crucial opportunity to promote clean energy over fossil fuels. MDBs need to align their support with the Paris Agreement and direct resources towards renewable energy. A World Bank 2020 study estimates that Pakistan could even meet its electricity generation needs by using just 0.071% of its land for solar PV, demonstrating the immense potential of solar energy.

The continued focus on fossil fuel projects in the technical assistance provided by MDBs such as the ADB raises concerns about consistency with their own statements on promoting a low-carbon future.”

Izzah Batool
Researcher, Indus Consortium
Pakistan

The ADB provided technical assistance when Pakistan was facing declining domestic gas production in recent years¹⁰. Currently, Pakistan's gas production is steadily declining and is expected to be depleted within the next fifteen years.

This situation had the potential to serve as a catalyst for accelerating clean and sustainable renewable energy. Instead of providing robust support for the country's pursuit of this avenue, the ADB provided technical assistance for gas storage that supported countries to continue relying on gas. This contributed to Pakistan's increase in gas demand and gas development expansion, which would ultimately lead to an energy development approach reliant on burdensome imports.

In 2021, when the ADB provided technical assistance to Pakistan for gas storage, the development of wind and solar power in Pakistan still only accounted for only 2.76% (see Figure 7) of total electricity generation. The accelerated deployment of wind and solar, whose levelized cost of electricity (LCOE) continues to fall, has huge potential to reduce carbon emissions and to lower the cost of electricity generation.

The ADB's technical support to Pakistan's gas sector in December 2021 could have prioritised the acceleration of Pakistan's clean and sustainable energy goals, rather than supporting fossil fuel expansion. Our analysis shows that the ADB has never provided specific technical assistance to wind or solar, either before or after the Paris Agreement. The ADB has provided loans and guarantees to the wind and solar sector only in 2010, 2011, 2014, and 2016, totalling \$114m (loan) and \$66.3m (guarantee).

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations reflect the importance of aligning MDBs' technical assistance with the Paris Agreement's goals and avoiding support for fossil gas projects. By taking proactive measures to redirect technical assistance toward sustainable and climate-friendly initiatives, MDBs can play a role in supporting governments to deliver the global transition to a low-carbon and resilient future:



All technical assistance in the energy sector must foster a democratically driven, sustainable, just and renewable energy transition.



Technical assistance should be directed toward supporting client countries to enhance ambition and fossil fuel phase out in their NDCs, consistent with global decarbonisation goals and a 1.5°C temperature limit.



Technical assistance should respond to the needs of client countries to tackle hard-to-decarbonise sectors of the economy and to expand renewable energy grid infrastructure to integrate existing and new wind and solar installations with the national grid.



All technical assistance for the energy sector should be approved by the Boards of the Multilateral Development Banks to ensure support does not "leak" to fossil fuels.



All technical assistance for the energy sector be publicly available and subject to meaningful, gender-responsive public consultation



STOP FUNDING GAS

APPENDIX 1.0 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR FOSSIL GAS: WORLD BANK (2016-2023)

No	Country	FY	Amount (USD)	Mechanism	Status (2023)	Institution	Project	Sector	Specific Focus
1	Bangladesh	2023	4,010,000	Grant	Active	IDA	Gas Sector Efficiency Improvement and Carbon Abatement Project for Bangladesh	Fossil Gas	Gas Distribution
2	Marocco	2023	N/A	N/A	Active	IFC	Morocco Liquefied Natural Gas	Fossil Gas	Gas Supply
3	Uzbekistan	2021	N/A	N/A	Completed	IFC	Uzbekistan Infrastructure Upstream: Programmatic Deep-Dive and Ideation	Fossil Gas	Gas, Mixed
4	Afghanistan	2020	35,200,000	Grant	Active	IDA	Afghanistan Gas Project	Fossil Gas	Gas Supply
5	Brazil	2020	38,000,000	Grant	Active	IBRD	Energy and Mineral Sectors Strengthening Project II	Oil and Gas	Extraction
6	Uzbekistan	2020	N/A	N/A	Active	IFC	Talimarjan CCGT Uzbekistan	Fossil Gas	Gas Power Generation
7	Guyana	2019	20,000,000	Loan	Active	IDA	Guyana Petroleum Resources Governance and Management Project	Oil and Gas	Oil and Gas Decision Making, Governance
8	Nigeria	2019	708,733	N/A	Completed	IFC	Gas Flare Study NG	Fossil Gas	Extraction
9	Uzbekistan	2019	2,163,811	N/A	Active	IFC	Syrdarya UZ CCGT (The Syrdarya II Combined Cycle Gas Power Plant)	Fossil Gas	Gas Power Generation
10	Ghana	2019	20,000,000	Loan	Active	IDA	Ghana Energy Sector Transformation Initiative Project	Oil and Gas	Gas Mixed
11	Mozambique	2018	28,000,000	Grant	Closed	IDA	Mining and Gas Technical Assistance Additional Financing	Oil and Gas	Extraction and Governance
12	Mauritania	2018	20,000,000	Grant	Active	IDA	Supporting Gas Project Negotiations and Enhancing Institutional Capacities	Oil and Gas	Exploration/Extraction
13	Vietnam	2018	N/A	N/A	N/A	World Bank	Addressing the Constraints on LNG Investment in Vietnam	Fossil Gas	Gas supply
14	Sierra Leone	2018	1,950,000	N/A	Active	IFC	Gas-to-power SSA	Fossil Gas	Gas Power Generation
15	Senegal	2017	29,000,000	Loan	Active	IDA	Supporting Gas Project Negotiations and Enhancing Institutional Capacities	Oil and Gas	Oil and Gas, Governance
16	Pakistan	2016	N/A	Loan	Closed	IDA	Project (Including Technical Assistance)	Oil and Gas	Electricity Production
Total			199,032,544						

APPENDIX 2.0 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR FOSSIL GAS: ADB (2016-2021)

No	Country	FY	Amount (USD)	Mechanism	Status (2023)	Project	Sector	Specific Focus
1	Pakistan	2021	600,000	Grant	Active	Gas Storage Development Systems	Natural Gas	Storage
2	Bangladesh	2020	2,000,000	Grant	Active	Sustainable and Resilient Energy Sector Facility in Bangladesh	Natural Gas	Electricity Production
3	South Asia, Eastern Europe & Central Asia	2020	1,500,000	Grant	Active	Preparing the TAPI Gas Pipeline Project (Phase 1)	Natural Gas	Transmission & Distribution
4	Uzbekistan	2019	2,875,000	Grant	Active	Preparing Sustainable Energy Investment Projects	Natural Gas	Transmission & Distribution
5	Sri Lanka	2019	225,000	Grant	Closed	Supporting Feasibility Study and Survey to Adopt Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Power Generation to Diversify Energy Mix	Natural Gas	Energy sector development and institutional reform
6	Kazakhstan	2019	225,000	Grant	Closed	Kazakhstan Gas Sector Transformation Initiative Support	Natural Gas	Energy sector development and institutional reform
7	Uzbekistan	2019	225,000	Grant	Closed	Preparation of Gas Infrastructure Modernization in Uzbekistan	Natural Gas	Transmission & Distribution
8	Turkmenistan	2018	100,000	Grant	Closed	Power Sector Development Project (Supplementary)	Natural Gas	Transmission & Distribution
9	Uzbekistan	2018	600,000	Grant	Closed	Power Generation Efficiency Improvement (Supplementary)	Natural Gas	Electricity Production
10	Uzbekistan	2018	225,000	Grant	Closed	Uzbekneftegas Corporate Transformation	Oil and Gas	Energy generation - Energy sector development and institutional reform
11	Bangladesh	2017	200,000	Grant	Closed	Khulna 800 MW LNG Based Power Plant Project (Supplementary)	Natural Gas	Electricity Production
12	Uzbekistan	2017	300,000	Grant	Active	Power Generation Efficiency Improvement Project (Supplementary)	Natural Gas	Electricity Production
13	Indonesia	2016	100,000	Grant	Closed	Eastern Indonesia Sustainable Energy Access Sector (Supplementary)	Natural Gas	Electricity Production
14	Azerbaijan	2016	1,000,000	Grant	Closed	Shah Deniz Stage II Investment Plan	Natural Gas	Extraction
15	Bangladesh	2016	225,000	Grant	Closed	Khulna 800 MW LNG Based Power Plant Project	Natural Gas	Electricity Production
16	Turkmenistan	2016	225,000	Grant	Closed	Power Sector Development Project	Natural Gas	Transmission & Distribution
Total			12,625,000					
17	Philippines	2018	2,000,000	Grant	N/A	The Philippine National Oil Company (PNOC) Batangas Liquefied Natural Gas	Natural Gas	Unclear or mixed

Note: *The total ADB technical assistance of \$12,625,000, comprising \$10,625,000 plus an additional \$2,000,000 (Batangas Liquefied Natural Gas project, which the ADB has confirmed has been cancelled).

ENDNOTES

- 1 See the Project Development Objective (PDO) of World Bank technical assistance on Bangladesh gas sector (page 7)
- 2 It includes direct support and support through financial intermediaries.
- 3 World Bank Group including: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), International Development Association (IDA), International Finance Corporation (IFC) , and Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA).
- 4 Some of the technical assistance included in the project has not been specified in terms of the amount. Also, details about the amount for some of the new technical assistance or advisory services have not been made public.
- 5 This is not included: ADB provided \$4.9m in technical assistance that indirectly supported the enabling environment for the gas sector through the [green finance taxonomy](#) programmes in Southeast Asia, resulting in the classification of [gas as 'green'](#) in the taxonomy.
- 6 We calculate ADB's technical assistance to the gas sector during the fiscal period 2010–2015 and compare it to the post-Paris Agreement period 2016–2021.
- 7 The Bangladesh case study chapter provides further analysis of this case.
- 8 It is important to remember that the 2009 Energy Policy categorised gas as both clean and having environmental benefits. The wording of the project is therefore not only in line with the policy framework but also emphasises that its implications go beyond the project itself and into broader energy considerations.
- 9 EVN, or the Electricity of Vietnam. PVN, or the Vietnam National Oil and Gas Group. PV Gas, or the Vietnam Gas Corporation
- 10 In 2012, Pakistan attained its peak level of natural gas production. Following that, there has been a gradual decline in production from existing fields in Pakistan, and current minor natural gas discoveries are inadequate in balancing out this drop in production.

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