

# BANGLADESH

# LG Bulletin

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A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER ON THE LOCAL GOVERNANCE SUPPORT PROJECT (LGSP) &  
NON-LENDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (NLTA) FOR STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN BANGLADESH

## BULLETIN HIGHLIGHTS

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## ONGOING ACTIVITIES

Amader Union in Channel i  
Every Thursday at 3.15 p.m.  
October 2010-June 2011

Survey on Expanded Block  
Grants  
December 2010-February 2011

Review of Independent Audit  
Program in LGSP  
December 2010-February 2011

Social Audit Pilot  
Dhaka Division  
July 2010-June 2011

## LAUNCH OF PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS FOR THE Second Local Governance Support Project



The Local Government Division (LGD) and the World Bank launched the public consultation for the successor to the Local Governance Support Project (LGSP) on October 31, 2010. The key note presentation consolidating the findings from 11 country wide consultations with 262 Union Parishad (UP) representatives from 69 UPs. It was presented by eight local government representatives. The findings revealed that the key success of LGSP were the increased autonomy of UPs that had been achieved through direct disbursement of funds, greater downward accountability through community involvement in planning, implementation and monitoring, and strengthened upward accountability through the annual audits. The primary challenges were the delay in the receipt of funds, the limited human resources available to the UPs, and the large variations between the market rates and schedule rates for the procurement of goods and works.

Syed Ashrafur Islam MP, the Honorable Minister for LGRD&C was the chief guest at the inaugural session, which was chaired by Abu Alam Md. Shahid Khan, the Secretary, LGD. The Minister stressed on the importance of local governance and stated, "We want to continue this program for helping local government bodies attain efficiency and stand on their own." Jahangir Kabir Nanak MP, Honorable State Minister for LGRD&C, was present as the special guest. He expressed his support for LGSP's successor project. The World Bank Country Director, Ellen Goldstein stated that LGSP now covers the entire country - with more

than 4400 Union Parishads receiving support through the project. She further stated that LGSP had more than quadrupled resources flowing to the UPs, enhancing their authority and ability to deliver local services demanded by their constituents. Approximately 70,000 community schemes have been implemented by UPs under LGSP so far, while more than 40,000 public officials have been trained in basic matters of local government functioning. LGSP has also initiated independent financial and technical audits of these local bodies. The chair and the LGD Secretary, Abu Alam Md. Shahid Khan said that the block grants should not be allocated only on the basis of UP population; the geographical variations and the poverty status should also be considered in the new project.

The second session included an open discussion and group work on the priorities for the follow on project (LGSP II). The participants stressed on enabling local government stakeholders to provide feedback on the implementation of LGSP. It would hopefully lead to a stronger design of LGSP II, while also increasing their sense of ownership. It was proposed to explore an expanded role for local governments in reviewing the Development Project Proforma (DPP) preparation, refining the UP Operations Manual (UPOM), as well as improving capacity building modules and modalities.

## *Fiscal transfers*

At present, 4,441 UPs out of a total 4,486 UPs are eligible for Expanded Block Grants (EBGs) in FY 2010-11. The total EBG allocation for the eligible UPs in FY 2010-11 is about Tk. 4.4 billion (\$64 million) to be disbursed in two tranches. The average size of EBG per UP this year is Tk. 995,000 (\$14,250) while the floor allocation for the smallest UPs is Tk. 825,000 (\$11,950). The EBGs are now released through two bank branches and this has substantially cut down on the delays in receipt of funds by the UPs. The first EBG tranche went out in October 2010. Even though this was still late as per agreed norms, it is worth noting that it went out earlier in the FY than in any previous year. LGD needs to be commended for this steady improvement.

## *LGSP supports UISC*

Sheikh Hasina, Honorable Prime Minister of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh launched the Union Information and Service Centers (UISCs) in all Union Parishads on November 11, 2011. The UISC was introduced in March 2009 as a pilot program of the Local Government Division under the Quick Win initiative of the Prime Minister's Office's Access to Information (A2I) program supported by UNDP. Through the A2I program the Government has equipped all UPs with computers and wireless internet to offer various digital information services to people at a nominal charge. LGSP has contributed significantly to the UISC initiative by funding the capacity building of the UISC entrepreneurs and enabling the use of discretionary block grants. The LGD encouraged UPs to utilize LGSP funds to undertake the direct purchase of computer hardware.

The challenge that lies ahead is the operation of these UISCs to enable improved access to information for citizens and improved digital management systems for Union Parishads.

## *Review of LGSP Union Parishad training program*

The review of the Union Parishad Training Program has just been completed. LGSP capacity building activities had originally been intended to be delivered through private sector Capacity Building Service Providers (CBSPs). The role of the National Institute of Local Government (NILG) had been initially conceived as being one of coordination, backstopping, supervision, and monitoring of CBSP activities. For a variety of reasons, this approach had failed entirely to get off the ground. It was replaced by a more orthodox approach that relies on a "cascade" training strategy – with NILG and other master trainers providing Upazila Resource Teams (URTs) with Training of Trainers (ToT), and with the URTs then going on to provide training to UP functionaries (elected and appointed).

Based on the findings of the review, it has been proposed that there is a need to develop a comprehensive and broad based capacity development plan deploying a range of capacity building approaches (i.e. cascade training, skills based training, study tour, horizontal learning etc.). Since the upazila level officials get transferred frequently, there is a dearth of trained officials in the URTs. The composition of the URTs should be widened to include retired government officials, local college teachers, local government unit's former chairmen and members based on pre-determined competency criteria. The coordination between LGD and NILG should also be made better for an effective capacity building program under the Second Local Governance Support Project.

## *Amader Union in Channel i*

The Channel i, a popular television channel in Bangladesh has started a series featuring Union Parishads, titled, Amader Union on every Thursday at 3.15 p.m. The TV feature is a part of the channel's popular program, Ridoye Maati O Manusher Dak. Amader Union has so far covered 12 UPs under LGSP.

## *Social audit pilot is in progress*

Village Education Resource Center (VERC) is facilitating the social audit pilot in 50 UPs in 14 upazilas in Dhaka Division. VERC organized orientation programs for the upazila level officials, UP delegates and leading citizens in all 14 upazilas to apprise them of the social audit process in the UPs.

The social audit strategy, training manuals and work plan have been finalized. Citizens' groups have been formed in all 50 UPs. Training for the project personnel and citizens' groups has also been completed. These citizens groups have initiated the first batch of social audits in UPs in January 2011, which will be concluded in March. The second batch will be initiated in May and be completed by June 2011.

A concluding workshop is being planned in June 2011 to inform the stakeholders of findings of this pilot to work on a strategy for expanding the program nation-wide.

## UCCM: an innovative practice

The Union Coordination Committee Meeting (UCCM) enables Union Parishads to bring together the service providers and recipients to improve service delivery. Through the replication of the UCCM, over 70 UPs have strengthened the accountability of public and private, community and household providers to citizens for the inclusiveness and quality of basic services. This is reflected in greater levels of satisfaction with the services delivered by Nation Building Departments.

Established with support of JICA assisted Second Participatory Rural Development Project (PRDP II), the UCCM consists of UP functionaries, extension workers of different public sector offices at the UP level, Village/ Gram Committee representatives and the Union Development Officer



(UDO). The UCCM is chaired by the UP Chairman with the UDO as the member secretary. During the UCCM meeting, the extension workers reported on the progress of their programs and formulated their work schedules for the next month.

UCCMs are chaired by the UP Chairman with the UP Secretary as the member secretary in the UPs who replicated UCCM under the guidance of Horizontal Learning Program. Most UPs now also include the private sector, school management committee and various community representatives.

The SHARIQUE Local Governance Program implemented by Intercooperation with the financial assistance of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) also introduced GO-NGO coordination meetings in more than 100 Unions in their work areas. All SHARIQUE supported UPs host coordination meetings without the support of UDOs.

The Local Government (UP) Act 2009 emphasizes the role of UPs in ensuring the quality of basic services for citizens. While UPs have never been a major provider of public services, they have always played a major role in coordinating service delivery. This suggests a core role of the UP of coordinating providers (public and private, community and household) to ensure inclusive and accountable basic services for all.

## Inauguration of Horizontal Learning Center

Mr. Abu Alam Md. Shahid Khan, Secretary, Local Government Division (LGD) inaugurated the Horizontal Learning Centre, the Secretariat of the Horizontal Learning Program (HLP), on December 13, 2010 at the National Institute of Local Government. Dr. Takao Toda, Chief Representative, JICA, Bangladesh was also present there.

The opening of the Horizontal Learning Centre (HLC) is expected to facilitate in scaling up the good practices introduced by different Union Parishads.

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WORLD BANK OFFICE, DHAKA  
Comments/Feedback/Enquiries

Syed Khaled Ahsan ([sahsan2@worldbank.org](mailto:sahsan2@worldbank.org))  
[www.worldbank.org/bdlocalgovernance](http://www.worldbank.org/bdlocalgovernance)

## Highlights of the LGSP Consultation

During September - October, 2010, consultations on the *experiences with LGSP* were organized with 262 Union Parishad representatives from 69 UPs through 11 workshops and audio-conferences. The Local Government Division organized the consultation process with the assistance of the Water and Sanitation Program (WSP).

In summary, the key *success* of LGSP has been the increased autonomy of UPs through direct disbursement of funds, greater downward accountability through community involvement in planning different schemes and strengthened upward accountability through financial audits. The primary *challenges* have been the delays in the receipt of funds and the limited human resources made available to support UPs. More specific findings from the consultations are as follows:

**Fiscal Transfers:** There is a need to address the delays in the disbursement of funds and rationalize the conditions for the receipt of funds.

**Operational Manual:** The Operational Manual was generally appreciated by UPs. There is a need to simplify the manual and the compliance conditions.

**Audits:** UPs received private audits and appreciated the hand-holding support of auditors. There are needs to rationalize the audits, improving predictability and train UPs on audit compliance.

**Capacity Building:** Most UPs received some training at upazila / district level. There is a need to broaden capacity building (i.e. horizontal learning, self selection). Number of UP staff needs to be increased as well.

**Participatory Planning:** Participatory planning is widespread, leading to increases in own source revenues. Longer term plans needs to be encouraged and rewards for service delivery improvements should be provided.

**Beyond LGSP:** UPs feel that it would be beneficial to extend participatory planning processes and UP coordination (i.e. UCCM) to other central programs (i.e. KABITA and KABIKHA).

**Social & Environmental Safeguards:** The training on social and environmental safeguards was inadequate. So UPs have been interpreting social and environmental safeguards for themselves. Systematic training on safeguards is important.

The external consultation process has revealed that UPs experiences can be deployed to improve the design of LGSP II. This could include involving UP representatives to advise on LGSP II project design, to support DPP preparation, to refine the operations manual, to support the capacity building of peers and to respond to detailed implementation questions posed by the LGSP and the World Bank task teams.