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institute of
governance &
development



January – March 2021 ■ Vol. 10 ■ Quarterly Newsletter

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT WATCH

INSIDE ISSUES

02 FIRST PPSC SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING

03 CITIZEN SUCCESS STORY: CITIZEN'S EFFORT RESULTING THE USE OF RIGHT CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS

03 CITIZENS STOP CASTING WORK IN BOGURA

NOW THEY ALSO WANT TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY OF THEIR OWN WORK

— Evan Ikram

Citizen engagement in Public Procurement should begin outside of the project area as well. This is the demand of the citizens outside the 48 upazila where project is currently running.

“Is this really possible! If it is, then it is amazing.”-said Imam Hossain. He is a businessman who has a shop in the city in his upazila. But this educated youth loves his country and stays updated with its news. The discussion was running on the World Bank-financed project titled: “Digitizing Implementation Monitoring and Public Procurement Project (DIMAPPP), which is an initiative of Central Procurement Technical



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Unit (CPTU) under the Implementation Monitoring & Evaluation Division (IMED) of the Ministry of Planning (MoP) and is being implemented by BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) to increase citizen engagement in public procurement. This serious discussion suddenly came up in the middle of a light-hearted conversation with friends. This is a proof that a good initiative naturally deserves appreciation and will undoubtedly be acceptable to everyone regardless of time or place.

The incident that I am talking about is from a real life experience of mine. The topic of citizen engagement in public procurement came up while I was talking about my work in a conversation with friends. I was telling them how in 48 upazilas of Bangladesh's 8 divisions citizens are the ones looking into the quality of public procurement work by being involved in the monitoring of its implementation. From the research that has been done so far, BIGD has found out that, the quality of work must be increased for sustainable development. Moreover, to increase the quality of work for 'free', there is no better alternative than involving the citizens who 'live next to the projects' and 'whose money is being invested'.

I was also telling my friends that these people who are monitoring public procurement work, do not just stop at verbal complaints, but many capture photos and videos as proof and post on social media sites, and even after lodging complaints keep an eye on it to see what step has been taken to tackle the issue in the end. And 100% of these complaints have also been later resolved by the intervention of responsible engineer.

In the midst of all these discussions, we did not notice when Md. Golam Rabbani had joined us. He suddenly spoke up, "Is it possible to do something

similar in our Palli Bidyut?" Md. Golam Rabbani is an intellectual who is a teacher by profession. At the same time, he is also a policy maker at the local Palli Bidyut Samiti. He learned about the entire concept of citizen engagement in public procurement with interest and got excited about starting it in the Palli Bidyut Samiti.

The upazila town that I am talking about is not part of the 48 upazilas where BIGD is conducting their citizen engagement project. But this upazila is proof of how people can be excited over a concept by just learning about few of its success stories. Actually, after seeing such interest from my friends' about citizen engagement in public procurement, I felt motivated and discussed about it with some local people. Among them were school teacher, ward commissioner, contractor, or local citizens gathered in tea stalls.

In almost every case I have noticed people's interest in taking public procurement work as their own responsibility and learning about its work. But it would be a lie to say that the opposite scenario does not exist. After speaking to a contractor I felt that this matter would only bring additional trouble for him.

Anyways, all this discussion is to simply demonstrate how much the idea of citizen engagement can be accepted by local citizens in just 2 years. Even citizens outside the project area want to be involved in verifying if public procurement work is running well. They want their localities to be part of the project as well. It still rings in my ears, the words of almost 70 year old Abdul Malek, "My country's work is my responsibility. I want to be the one to observe construction of the road that will be built in front of my house, and the school my granddaughter will study in!"

FIRST PPSC SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING

On 25 January 2021, the 1st sub-committee meeting of Public Private Stakeholders Committee (PPSC) under Digitizing Implementation Monitoring and Public Procurement Project (DIMAPPP) was held. In light of the current corona situation, the meeting took place virtually. This meeting which was in collaboration with BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), was chaired by the secretary of IME Division of Planning Ministry and the convenor of PPSC Sub-committee, Pradip Ranjan Chakraborty. Mohammed Shoheler Rahman Chowdhury, Director General of CPTU and member secretary of sub-committee, moderated the meeting. Progress of implementation of the decisions that were made at the 13th PPSC meeting was discussed in this meeting, and possible agenda

for the next PPSC meeting was presented. Furthermore, BIGD's Team Leader Mirza Hassan and Programme Manager Syeda Salina Aziz shared a presentation on the progress of field level level implementation of citizen engagement in public procurement.

Pradip Ranjan Chakraborty emphasized on the importance of citizen engagement in public procurement in his speech. In light of his own experience he further enforced the idea of engaging more citizens in public procurement.

Mohammed Shoheler Rahman Chowdhury said that, "The purpose of PPSC is to involve the private sector in public procurement process. It is the role of the PPSC sub-committee to assist and accelerate the work of PPSC."

Among others present at the meeting were, Chief Engineer of Roads and Highways division Md. Abdus Sabur, Chairman of Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board Major General Moin Uddin, Director General of Foreign Aided Projects Audit Directorate Khan Mohammad Ferdousur Rahman, Convenor of BGTF and Executive Engineer of LGED Md. Abdus Sattar, Chief Executive Officer of FBCCI Md. Mahfuzul Hoque, Additional Chief Engineer of LGED Md. Ahsan Habib, Executive Engineer of Water Development Board Mohammad Abu Bakar Siddique, Director of CPTU Masud Akhter Khan, Principal Project Management Consultant of DIMAPPP Mosta Gausul Hoque, Senior Communications Consultant Md. Shafiul Alam and officials of BIGD.

CITIZEN SUCCESS STORY

CITIZEN'S EFFORT RESULTING THE USE OF RIGHT CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS

In Katiadi upazila of Kishoreganj, under local engineering department's Kishoreganj infrastructure development project, the building of crossroads from Pacholgota bus stand to Jamshait Uttarpara was underway. And it was being monitored by local citizens. The citizens had complaints against the construction materials being used for the road. They observed that tenderers had used low quality 3rd grade bricks and the thickness of cobbles for casting was lower than required.

The citizens complained to the responsible engineer and he immediately took step by ordering the tenderer to use good quality bricks and right thickness of cobbles for casting. Therefore the tenderer was bound to do the work properly.



WORK IN BOGURA

Roof welding work of Darigacha Islamic High School in Shahjahanpur upazila of Bogura was taking place. On the day of the welding, all workers were preparing themselves with different equipment in the morning. At that time, a local citizen got on the roof and noticed that the pipe for electrical line was not laid properly. Despite the instruction suggested use of 1 inch pipe, tenderer had used only half an inch in its place.

Moreover, there were no restriction on the top bar of the beam. After noticing all these issues, citizen monitoring group members stopped the construction work. They then called and complained to the responsible engineer. The engineer came to the spot and identified a total of 5 problems and noted them down in the site work book. After discussing with district engineer, the welding was canceled. Therefore, tenderer had to donate Tk16,000 as labour bill.

Citizen engagement activities at field: Quarterly update

Activities	Until March, 2020
Group formation	232
Group orientation	232
Site meetings	287
Grievances	273
Grievances from Citizen monitoring group	267



Signboard with project information in Khuniapalang of Ramu in Cox's Bazar damaged by miscreants.



Meeting organized to discuss details of Buruli High school building construction project.



Completion of citizen monitoring group orientation in Dhangora union of Raiganj upazila in Sirajganj district.



Project site visit and discussion with citizen monitoring group members in Sherpur upazila.



1. Verification of citizen's complaints on development of Dhulirchora road of Ramu upazila in Cox's Bazar.



Orientation of Buruli Lower Middle School building construction project. Gourighona, Keshabpur.



Inspection of base casting of Saldair Khidrogoprekhi Government Primary school in Belkuchi of Sirajganj.



Construction of Chonkhola-Noapara road, P.M. Khali Union, Cox's Bazar sadar.

