



# PUBLIC PROCUREMENT WATCH

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## WHAT HAPPENS AT THE CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT DIVISIONAL WORKSHOP?

— Kabita Chowdhury

**W**e know that about 80% of the country's development budget is allocated for public procurement. Therefore, the topic of public procurement is essential in the discussion of Bangladesh's overall development. Even the government has emphasized on the importance of developing a transparent and accountable public procurement system by strengthening Bangladesh's public procurement system through proper reformation.

As a continuation of such efforts, the Central Procurement Technical Unit (CPTU) under the Implementation Monitoring & Evaluation

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Division (IMED) of the Ministry of Planning (MoP) is implementing a World Bank-financed project titled: "Digitising Implementation Monitoring and Public Procurement Project (DIMAPPP)." Under this project 48 upazilas of country's 8 divisions have gradually started working on engaging citizens in public procurement work.

Brac University's Brac Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) is working as consultant of CPTU for this project. They are working on developing a realistic strategy to implement ways to ensure citizen engagement and assisting in monitoring the implementation of public procurement on field level by the help of local citizens. BRAC's Community Empowerment Programme (CEP) is helping BIGD at the field level.

Due to the target of creating a constructive and systemic model for citizen engagement in public procurement by taking advice from relevant stakeholders, raising awareness on citizen engagement in public procurement, and exchanging experiences gained at the field, 8 divisional workshops have been organized all over Bangladesh. In this workshop, everyone is informed about all the recent updates on citizen engagement in public procurement and discussions on the advantages and disadvantages of the existing system take place. Moreover, suggestions are taken on further developing the model.

Generally, representatives of local public procurement entities (such as, Water Development Board, Local Government Engineering Department, etc.), tenderers, local government representatives, local citizens and members of Citizen Monitoring Committee take part in the workshop. The workshop also sees presence of Divisional Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner. From IMED, Planning Ministry, Secretary attends, and from CPTU, Director General and Director attends the workshop.

Most of the time, the workshop takes place at the Circuit House auditorium. The 3 hour long workshop is divided into 2 sessions. During the 1st half, discussions on DIMAPPP's field work updates, guests' speeches, and open discussion between participants and guests take place. During the 2nd half, group discussions and presentation occurs.

Due to the presence of all of them, the discussions are always very lively and a lot can be learned from the interactions. If construction work is being undertaken in front of committee member's house, they would willingly take the responsibility of monitoring upon themselves. He believes that it is his duty to ensure that the quality is being maintained, and to complain to relevant engineers if it is not maintained. Usually the general citizens complain about the work of tenderers and engineers at this workshop. Engineers and tenderers then share their limitations while working. Representatives try to run the discussion sessions without any biasness. But apart from complaints, success stories are also shared. The discussions get even more informative when senior government officials share their knowledge on citizen engagement in public procurement and E-GP.

The aim and interest of the workshop is achieved because of all the informative discussions by the participants. The process of engaging citizens, its advantages-disadvantages, and the obstacles while implementing public procurement, all were discussed in the presence of the attendees. We wish that there will come a day when the government would not have to take steps to ensure citizen engagement in public procurement; citizens would monitor work of their locality by taking accountability due to their own interest.



## TREAT GOVERNMENT PROJECTS AS SELF-RESPONSIBILITY

### IMED SECRETARY

“Citizens must value government projects as their own responsibility, only then can top quality of such projects be ensured. There are no alternatives to citizen awareness to achieve transparency and accountability in government projects. Taking ownership at every stage can improve the quality of such projects.” Secretary of Planning Ministry’s IME Division Pradip Ranjan Chakraborty came as the Chief Guest of the divisional workshop of Dhaka division and explained the importance of citizen engagement in government procurement activities.

The divisional workshop was held on Sunday, November 29, 2020, at the Rajendrapur BRAC CDM. It was organized by the Central Procurement Technical Unit (CPTU) which falls under the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division of the Planning Ministry of Bangladesh. The purpose of this workshop is to engage stakeholders and share field experience regarding citizen engagement in public procurement.

M. Tariqul Islam, the District Coordinator of Gazipur, presided as the Special Guest of the workshop. Following the introductory remarks by the Program Manager Syeda Salina Aziz from Brac Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), team leader Dr. Mirza Hassan presented a backdrop of citizen engagement in government procurement. The event was chaired by the Director General of CPTU Md. Shoheler Rahman Chowdhury.

Shoheler Rahman underscored the importance of citizen engagement in government activities as he explained, “government procurement can be made more transparent and accountable with the inclusion of the public. Citizen awareness has contributed towards improved completion of projects through DIMAPPP.”

In the Q&A session of the workshop, participants shared opinions and queries related to merits and concerns around the current public procurement

process, present strategies around citizen engagement, sustainable activities towards engaging citizens in the public procurement process, needed activities by the government and bidders, etc. The workshop was attended by government officers in procurement services, bidders, civil society organizations, local government representatives, and active citizens.

The Central Procurement Technical Unit (CPTU) under the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division of the Planning Ministry has been implementing the project titled “Digitising Implementation Monitoring and Public Procurement Project (DIMAPPP)” in 48 Upazilas of the country’s 8 divisions to engage citizens in the public procurement process. Brac Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), Brac University is operating as CPTU’s project consultant. To bring citizen engagement in public procurement, BIGD’s role is to assist in developing an implementation framework and empower local citizens to monitor public procurement at the field level.

While ensuring citizen engagement in public procurement, BIGD aims to implement a strategy that is adaptable, sustainable, and compatible with the political environment of Bangladesh. BIGD is attempting to implement the concept of site-specific or contractual citizen engagement. BRAC’s Community Empowerment Programme (CEP) is helping BIGD on it at the field level.

BIGD is implementing two different strategies simultaneously to find the most effective way through field experience. In most Upazilas, it is preparing a local citizen group based on locals living near the project site whose goal is to observe work progress and to inform the local government in-charge of any irregularities. These groups are called citizen monitoring groups. Meanwhile, no groups have been prepared in some sites to observe the local engagement without project intervention.



## PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION UNINTERRUPTED EVEN DURING PANDEMIC GTF WORKSHOP IN NETROKONA AND MUNSHIGANJ

Under the DIMAPPP project, GTF workshops are being held at district and divisional level. The purpose of this workshop is create an effective platform for tenderers and procuring entities to have an open discussion regarding implementation of public procurement.

Government Tenderer's Forum (GTF) organized 2 workshops in Netrokona and Munshiganj between October to December in 2020. In both the workshops, IMED Secretary Pradip Ranjan Chakraborty served as the Chief Guest, and Director General of CPTU Md. Shoheler Rahman Chowdhury served as special guest.

On the chief guest's speech, secretary informs that the government is working with dedication to advance difference kinds of development projects.

Director general on his speech shared that, "We need to identify the problems and find solutions for them, and for that we are engaging citizens from the local level. We are optimistic that the procuring entities will ensure the quality of the work and the tenders will work according to the contract while ensuring quality.

The 2 workshops were organized at Netrokona and Munshiganj's Deputy Commissioner's office, and the deputy commissioners presided over the workshops at their respective districts. Representatives of different procuring entities, tenderer, bank representatives, and media personnel participated at the workshop. Khadija Bilkis, senior deputy director of BCCP hosted the workshop. Md. Salah Uddin, CPTU's additional director gave speech at the workshop.

### Citizen's success story

Increased importance of road due to the complaint of citizen's of Kishoreganj

Work was running well for Sorarchar to Halimpur road of Bajitpur upazila of Kishoreganj district. In a state where the road would be useful in few days, citizens noticed that tenderer's people were casting without removing the dirt from the road. Not only that, but the thickness of the layering was below required.

After seeing this, the concerned citizens informed DIMAPPP's field officer. The tenderer was then asked to remove the dirt from the road and instructed

to increase the thickness of the casting from the beginning to the end of the road.

#### Citizen engagement activities at field: Quarterly update

Activities	Until December, 2020
Group formation	227
Group orientation	227
Site meetings	280
Grievances	201
Total grievance from group member	138

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