



## Empowering Citizens to Play a Role in Public Procurement

To understand the perceptions of the citizens regarding the necessity of citizen monitoring and to understand what empowers and motivates citizens to participate effectively, BIGD undertook a one month qualitative investigation in Sylhet where the Citizen Engagement (CE) model is piloted.

Findings from the research show that the effects of complex interactions between citizens, engineers and contractors influence the level at which citizens engage and participate in monitoring.

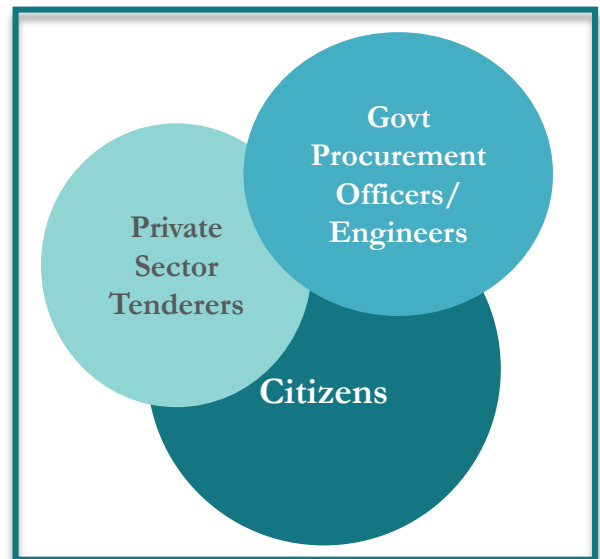
### A Case for Site-Specific Citizen Monitoring of Public Service Delivery

When public works are implemented, the local community is the most impacted, both in terms of benefits received or suffering endured (if the quality of the works are not good). As such, empowering local citizens to monitor the quality of public services increases local government accountability and responsiveness.

To explore the benefits of a 'Citizen Engagement' model (CE), the Government of Bangladesh partnered with BIGD to set up a pilot in 16 upazilas to monitor the construction of roads and schools across the country. The site-specific citizen groups were selected to represent the population and received training and simple tools that enabled them to monitor tender implementation. The groups, called Nagorik porjobekhhok (Citizen Observers), were introduced to the local public procurement officer to build a relationship and common understanding.

The intervention process is as follows: construction project list collection, citizen group formation + orientation, announcement for site meeting, site meeting arrangement and sign board installation, grievance recording, verification + grievance management.

### Platform for Citizen Engagement (CE)



#### Research Methodology

- Researchers conducted studies in two upazilas: Kamalganj + Baniachong, Sylhet
- 28 In-depth interviews of citizens from monitoring groups, gov't engineers and contractors were conducted.
- 6 Focus Group Discussions were conducted.
- Data from the MIS was used.

#### Research Questions

- What factors influence the engagement of citizens?
- What grievances did the model overcome? Other benefits?
- What are the challenges in the current design?

### What grievances did this intervention address? What additional benefits?

Nature of the grievances	Number
Low quality brick chips	15
Low quality sand/soil	08
Delayed start of work	07
Improper ratio of mixture	06
Not watering the roof	03
Edging problem	02
Soil leveling problem	02
Not using roller/vibrator	02
Problem in iron bar/column	01
Sand extraction	01
Guide wall problem	01

#### Additional benefits

- Citizens reported that the knowledge they gained helped them in the construction monitoring of their own homes and other construction projects in the area.
- Female citizens reported feeling empowered after participation in the group.
- Engineers reported feeling relieved as they were no longer facing pressure from rent-seekers either from above or from outside.
- Contractors reported feeling safe-guarded as any future problems with the construction would not then be blamed on them.

### CITIZENS

- Citizens felt CE platform improved transparency in project implementation and they want this platform to continue.
- Citizens felt it is their right and responsibility to monitor public works.
- Involve more educated people in citizen groups.
- Provide more training and tools to avoid ill-informed complaints.
- Explore ways to incentivize sustained participation.
- Address gender factors and other influencing factors to include more women.
- Citizens want local elected representatives to participate in site meetings.

### GOV'T ENGINEERS

- Engineers felt citizens lack technical knowledge needed to monitor procurement projects, which led to ill-informed complaints and delays.
- Engineers felt CE requires time and resources and delay work.
- Sufficient training of citizens is of critical importance.
- Selection of citizens should be done carefully to involve people with no ulterior motives.
- Streamline the process for efficiency so it does not increase workload.
- Incentives, performance monitoring and recognition mechanisms may be helpful to motivate participation of engineers.

### TENDERERS

- Tenderers felt citizens may become another layer of rent-seekers.
- Tenderers felt CE may result in delays that drain resources.
- Verify complaints before taking actions.
- Involve committed, trained, and responsible citizens only.
- Explore ways to incentivize tenderers, such as recognition award for strong performers and blacklisting of poor performers.

### FIELD OFFICERS

- Field officers felt building a relationship with upazila engineers was not always easy.
- Field officers felt some citizens, such as the School Management Committees, felt that CE was a duplication of efforts and were resistant.
- Field Officers felt building a relationship with tenderers was not always easy.
- Develop tools and toolkits to simplify and streamline the process.
- Specific instructions and guidance to engineers should come from central agencies.
- Overall, beneficial and should be scaled up nationally.

### Factors influencing citizen participation

- Gender (30% of citizens participating in site meetings were women). Women reported several obstacles to their participation - chores, mobility, uncomfortable interacting with men, some needed husband's permission
- Time of meeting. Most people were day-workers, so afternoon meetings were better for them
- Sense of ownership. Those living closest to the construction sites were more likely to participate
- Age. Retired people had time to engage while youths had less time



Brac Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD); Full report available at [www.bigd.bracu.ac.bd](http://www.bigd.bracu.ac.bd)

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Creating platforms for social accountability in rural Bangladesh.

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