

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT WATCH


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Field Wrap up: End of an Important Chapter

BIGD designed a citizen engagement model which was being implemented in collaboration with Social Empowerment and Legal Protection (SELP) of BRAC at 48 Upazilas all over the country from 2019 March to 2022 March. Starting with 16 upazilas in the first year, by the second year the project had taken over 48 upazilas. In this model, local citizens were mobilised to monitor construction projects in their locality. To do this, BIGD and BRAC field officers formed site-specific local citizen groups in 36 upazilas and provided relevant training and orientation to the group on elementary evaluation skills for judging the quality of the projects. The process

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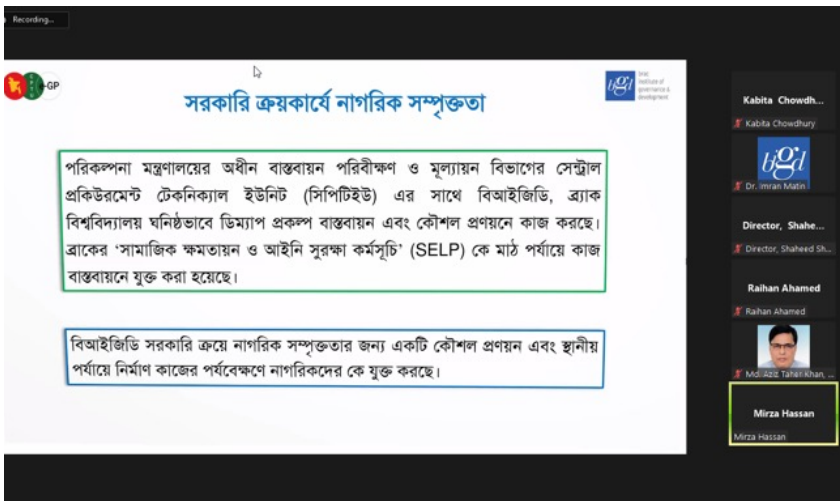
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engaged local Procuring Entities (PE) such as local Government Engineering Department (LGED) Education Engineering Department (EED) and the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) in the process, along with the local government representatives and general citizens. Citizen groups monitored the projects and informed the authority when they found any irregularity. In the remaining 12 upazilas, no monitoring groups were formed but the citizens were provided information on the projects during site meetings. The factor of group and no group was kept for research purpose, to understand the differences among citizens who were under constant guidance and who were not. But both shared the same objective, which was to monitor public works.

Through this initiative, 315 small-scale development contracts on roads, schools, bridges, and upazila

and UP complexes were brought under citizens' monitoring as of March 2022. 254 citizen groups have been formed. The program, directly and indirectly, involved 2516 citizen group members. The responsiveness of the local PEs also helped. So far, citizens have raised 444 complaints, out of which 417 have been resolved. Within this period, 108 projects have been monitored from the start till its completion. The remaining are still ongoing but without the intervention of BIGD and BRAC. According to Raihan Ahamed, Senior Programme Associate, BIGD, who was in charge of the field officers, the citizen group members have been thoroughly trained and guided to monitor construction works with accountability. It is time they used this sense of ownership to continue monitoring the works on their own without supervision. If citizens can take charge, they can make every project a success.

Citizen Engagement Forums



regard, he believes that proper background check is necessary of the citizens being engaged in this initiative. Monjur Morshed, Citizen Member, Dhunat Upazila, Bogura stated that there have been many incidents where they were discouraged by the local political influences to not report any irregularities. As they are normal citizens, they feel intimidated and request the panelists to look into the matter. The workshop ended with the participants looking forward to work together better.

Bogura

On 9 January 2022, CEF Bogura was arranged virtually. Abu Hena Morshed Zaman, Secretary, IMED, Ministry of Planning; Md. Ziaul Haque, District Commissioner and District Magistrate, Bogura; Syeda Salina Aziz, Senior Programme Manager BIGD; organizers of DIMAPPP; stakeholders of DIMAPPP etc. Abu Hena Morshed Zaman advised the district commissioner to turn this initiative into a movement. They must also try to recreate this initiative in places beyond their jurisdiction and capacity. Md. Ziaul Haque stated that from experiences he

is afraid that if the citizens feel overpowered, they may take the opportunity to harass the engineers and contractors out of personal vendetta or being influenced by rivals. In this



Monjur Morshed

Narsingdi

On 23 January 2022, a virtual workshop was arranged at Narsingdi. The event was graced by Abu Hena Morshed Zaman, Secretary, IMED, Ministry of Planning; Abu Naim Md. Maruf Khan, District Commissioner and Magistrate, Narsingdi and other relevant stakeholders. Abu Hena Morshed Zaman pointed out that this initiative is important as it deals with public procurement and expenditure where 2/5 of public project deals with procurement. He also pointed out that this has helped to spread democracy at the grassroot level and establish accountability. Abu Naim Md. Maruf Khan suggested



Kazi Anwar Kamal

that public representatives in local level should be more involved to empower the citizens. Mirza Hassan pointed out that BIGD took extensive research methods to collect its findings. Throughout its research it found that many factors affect the success of this project. Kazi Anwar Kamal from Daily Grameen Darpan pointed out that contractors whenever are approached about their ill practices, see the complainers as their rival group. The participants of the workshop took note of the learnings and promised to work on them in the future.

Netrokona

A virtual workshop was arranged at Netrokona on 10 February 2022. Abu Hena Morshed Zaman, Secretary, IMED, Ministry of Planning, stated



Md. Shohidul Islam

that this was the government's mandate to take development projects, procure etc. only to develop the people and this is also the reason we need to hear out the people. Kazi Md. Abdur Rahman, District Commissioner and Magistrate, Netrokona, pointed out that a certain reluctance can be seen amongst government engineers and contractors to work alongside the civilians and such engagement groups. However, we see that there is no real basis for such behaviour. Md. Shohidul Islam, from the Daily Amader Shomoy, stated that he, himself once noticed a few irregularities at the administrative complex in his area and when he raised the issue it was resolved immediately.

Kishoreganj

On 17 February 2022, CEF Kishoreganj was arranged virtually. Abu Hena Morshed Zaman, Secretary, IMED, Ministry of Planning, stated that these workshops are important as the feedbacks collected here



Md. Nazrul Islam

are presented to the Ministry of Planning so that it can be considered while preparing the annual budget as 80% of government project dictates public procurement. Md. Shamim Alam, District Commissioner and Magistrate, Kishoreganj, stated that we should engage the citizens in the implementation process because once the project is completed, there is little opportunity to address

grievances. Md. Nazrul Islam, from the Daily Katiadi Probaho stated that he was glad to see this initiative of DIMAPPP. He added that he hopes to see this flourish everywhere in our country.



Shah Fakhruzzaman

Habiganj

CEF Habiganj was arranged virtually on 24 February 2022. Abu Hena Morshed Zaman, Secretary, IMED, Ministry of Planning, stated that government officials must not be apathetic to the call of the people. Moreover, this will give them recognition. Ms. Ishrat Jahan, District Commissioner and Magistrate, Habiganj, stated that she is ready to extend any form of help possible from her end. Shah Fakhruzzaman, the Daily Kalerkontho, stated that before this initiative they used to partake themselves in a manner to report irregularities in government initiative. He also added that he would suggest more initiatives like this and access to information are taken for the development of the nation and people.

Khulna

On 10 March 2022, CEF Khulna was arranged virtually. The event was joined by Md. Aziz Taher Khan, Director, CPTU, IMED, Ministry of



Mst. Sajeda Begum

Planning; Md. Moniruzzaman Talukder, District Commissioner and Magistrate, Khulna; Md. Ismail Hossain, Divisional Commissioner, Khulna; Mirza Hassan, Team Leader, BIGD, BRAC University; panelists from CPTU; researchers from BIGD;

Citizen Engagement Groups; public engineers; contractors alongside others. Md. Aziz Taher Khan pointed out that according to TIB, government organizations are leading in terms of publicizing information. Mirza Hassan stated that in terms of Citizen Engagement in Khulna Division, citizen engagement has taken place at Shatkhira and Jashore. There are 30 active projects and 9 have been completed so far in Khulna Division. Md. Moniruzzaman Talukder requested that a proper legal framework is provided by CPTU or IMED so that the collaboration between public and civic engagement in the local level is more feasible. Md. Ismail Hossain implored that

the people who will take part in this initiative must be well informed so that no malpractice takes place. Mst. Sajeda Begum, Citizen Monitoring Group member, started by requesting the panelists to listen to her case with their full attention. She stated that after being part of this initiative, she had provided feedback accordingly. But the contractors and engineers misbehaved with her by using foul language. Then she contacted the authorities and confronted them. It was later resolved and the people who misbehaved with her had to apologize. She implored everyone to take steps so that these situations may never occur anymore.

Field updates

On 4th January, construction work of a 5 storey roof column of academic building of Haji Abdul Aziz Khan Degree College of Madan Upazila Government Netrokona District was completed and the centering of the beam is in progress. Currently, the construction work of the 5-storey roof column of the college hostel is in progress.



On 9th February, construction work of the classroom for Nagagati Primary School in Rajapur Union of Belkuchi upazila of Sirajganj district was inspected. Plastering work is going on at that site. Citizens are supervising the work in person.



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