

Lessons of Second Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement Project (UGIIP-II): Innovative Special Initiatives of Sreemangal Pourashava

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Introduction

The Second Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement Project (UGIIP-II) seeks to improve urban governance and infrastructure by increasing the participation of the community and enhancing the capacity of the pourashava local governments to deliver desired municipal services to the people. The project has features that make it different from previously implemented urban development projects in Bangladesh. The project (i) promotes good governance; (ii) builds capacity to improve the performance of pourashavas in mobilizing their own resources and delivering better services to the people, especially the poor; and (iii) assists municipalities in mobilizing the community through grassroots organizations for the planning, implementation, and monitoring of programs that affect their lives. These special features have one common characteristic: they put the community at the heart of development. The chosen pourashavas know that they will receive development funds under the project, only after they fulfill a number of designated tasks relating to improving urban governance and their own capacity. In the UGIIP-II, funds are not meant to be charity; rather, they are earned through performance. The key to good performance is the community and its citizens' active participation in the development of their own towns and cities.

Sreemangal Pourashava is located in Sylhet division and is one of the thirty-five chosen pourashavas of UGIIP-II. It was selected as one of the five model pourashavas for the third phase of UGIIP-II by successfully fulfilling all required criteria. The Sreemangal Pourashava adopted some innovative and special initiatives

on its own which was acclaimed by the Project Management Office (PMO), Local Government Engineering Department (LGED). This article attempts to investigate the lessons of the Second Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement Project (UGIIP-II) where Sreemangal Pourashava is chosen as a case study to explore what initiatives were taken by this pourashava to become a model for other pourashavas. The projects of UGIIP is supported and financed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and implemented by the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) under the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, the national agency responsible for extending technical support to all rural and urban local governments in Bangladesh. Now a brief narration of UGIIP is provided below as to how it works.

Overview of the Second Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement Project (UGIIP-II)

The Asian Development Bank or ADB has had a long history of involvement in urban sector development in Bangladesh. UGIIP-II, which is being implemented over a 6-year period that started in 2009, will be completed in 2014 at an estimated cost of \$167.5 million (ADB, 2012). As UGIIP-II's lead donor, ADB is contributing \$87 million (51.9% of the total cost), while two German donors – KFW and GIZ – are providing \$36.1 million (21.6%) and \$4.7 million (2.8%), respectively. The Government of Bangladesh has invested \$31.7 million (18.9%) in UGIIP-II, and the selected pourashavas are contributing \$7.3 million (4.4%) and community beneficiaries \$0.7 million (0.4%) (ADB, 2012). About 35 pourashavas in seven divisions of the country were included in phase 1 and successfully qualified for phase 2 of UGIIP-II. UGIIP has been recognized as model of urban development that ensures sustainability, good governance, accountability, and transparency through community participation in the planning, monitoring, and implementation of projects identified and designed by the community people themselves.

The goal of UGIIP-II is to promote human development and good urban governance in secondary (medium and smaller) towns and support them in leading sound and balanced urban development. UGIIP-II has two objectives in support of this goal: (i) to develop and improve urban infrastructure facilities to increase economic opportunities and to reduce vulnerability to environmental degradation, poverty, and natural hazards; and (ii) to enhance accountability in municipal management and strengthen the capacities of urban municipalities to deliver services. The two objectives are to be achieved through the three key components of UGIIP-II as stated below:

- **Urban Infrastructure Improvement** covers the improvement or expansion of the following facilities: roads and bridges, storm water drainage, low-cost sanitation, solid waste management, municipal facilities (e.g., bus and truck terminals, kitchen markets, and slaughterhouses), and slum improvement.
- **Urban Governance Improvement** includes the implementation of the Urban Governance Improvement Action Program (UGIAP) in six key result areas: (i) citizen awareness and participation, (ii) urban planning, (iii) women's participation, (iv) integration of the urban poor, (v) financial accountability and sustainability, and (vi) administrative transparency. In each of these six areas, the pourashavas will need to achieve well-defined performance targets, which will be closely monitored and evaluated during the implementation.
- Finally, **Capacity Building and Implementation Assistance** involves (i) project management, detailed engineering design, construction supervision, nongovernment organization support for community based activities, and facilitation of community mobilization; and (ii) an institutional capacity building program for pourashavas to enable them to successfully implement the UGIAP, including (a) an orientation program for pourashava mayors and ward councilors; (b) a program tailored to the needs of female ward councilors; (c) training programs for secretaries, chief executive officers, and other officials and staff in the implementation of the community-based activities under the plan; (d) computerization of tax records and billing; (e) computerization of accounting management; (f) infrastructure inventory assessment and mapping; and (g) training for decentralized township planning.

UGIIP-II has a number of different features that reflect important lessons that policy makers learned from the implementation of other urban development projects in the country. Before the introduction of UGIIP-II, there were no minimum targets for improvements in governance that the original pourashavas had to meet in order to receive the first allocation. Therefore, the linkage between infrastructure development and governance improvement was not strong (e.g., participatory planning was not always pursued rigorously in the first phase of allocation of funds). Performance evaluation of the pourashava activities was also undertaken only at the end of each phase, thus making it difficult to undertake corrective actions midway through implementation.

In contrast, UGIIP-II necessitated all participating pourashavas to meet the minimum criteria of governance improvement including participatory planning through the formulation of a pourashava development plan right from the first allocation of funds.

In this way, governance improvement and infrastructure development were planned and implemented in a more integrated manner. In addition, the progress of reform particularly in governance was monitored quarterly throughout the project.

Conditions in the Selected Pourashavas before the UGIIP-II

Urbanization in Bangladesh has produced unplanned and uncontrolled urban growth, resulting in an acute shortage of infrastructure, poor housing and transport, inadequate drinking water, and lack of drainage and sewage. Therefore, urban residents, particularly low-income groups, suffer from lack of basic urban infrastructure and services. While 95% of the Bangladesh population reportedly has access to water, only 30% of urban households drink tap water and fewer than 20% have their own house connections (LGED, 2009).

However, the performance of the selected pourashavas of UGIIP-II had been far from satisfactory before the implementation of the project (ADB, 2012). These local government institutions suffered chronic shortages of own resources, leaving them dependent on national government allocations. Not only did they lack money and resources, they also lack capacity. Tax collection was poor because of lack of officials designated and well-informed as to how to collect taxes; similarly the staff assigned lacked necessary skills - thus leaving many residents outside the tax net.

Pourashava delivery of urban services also presented a dismal picture. Traffic congestion was common in the pourashavas because of lack of roads and poor traffic management. There was no systematic domestic garbage collection plan. Thus, garbage collection was slow and, in the absence of garbage bins in many places, garbage was dumped besides streets, where it most often lay uncollected for days. Pavements and streets were often littered with wastes produced by street vendors.

Many streets were dark at night for lack of lights, making the streets and alleys havens for muggers. Ironically, many of these streets remained lighted during the day when it was not needed. Such waste often goes unnoticed by pourashava employees, as well as by community residents. The pourashavas were infamous for poor sanitation. There were no sewage lines in most pourashavas and many residents did not seem to care about proper waste disposal. Poor people who migrate to the towns in search of jobs and better living conditions usually ended up in slums where amenities are virtually nonexistent. More than lack of funds, UGIIP-II identified the poor state of governance and lack of community participation as the two major reasons for the poor performance of the pourashavas. UGIIP-II undertook steps to improve such conditions.

Improving Conditions in Pourashavas Supported by UGIIP-II

With the support of the UGIIP-II and its development partners, 35 pourashavas were blazing a new path, gradually transforming themselves into competent entities that were responsive to the needs of the community, accountable for their actions, and transparent in their activities.

The UGIIP-II sought to showcase the achievements of the selected pourashavas in their designated tasks, the lessons learned from their work, the effects on the government's urban development policy, and the efforts that still have to be made to sustain the momentum generated by such inspiring concept: that development should be for the people and by the people. People lives in the chosen pourashavas have changed for the better because of poverty alleviation activities of the project. The UGIIP-II pourashavas were able to mobilize their own resources through effective collection of taxes and nontax revenue earnings. They were also more responsive to the needs of the community – spending a large part of the increased revenue to improve the living standards of the poor, especially the slum dwellers, by creating jobs for them through microcredit and providing their children free education.

Every UGIIP-II pourashavas prepared citizens' charters detailing the services it was to provide to the citizens, location of facilities, and fees to be charged. A list of services was posted on a large display board in the pourashava compound public viewing. The services available were publicized through leaflets and posting on small display boards in different parts of the town. Citizens' complaints were now better heard and attended to.

The grievance redress cell set up in each pourashava enabled citizens to submit their complaints in writing. This cell also served as an arbitration mechanism as elected representatives and pourashava officials had to find quick solutions for these complaints. Citizens feel encouraged to seek redress for disputes over land, business, or even family conflicts from the pourashavas before going to the court. The project inspired resource constrained municipalities to improve service delivery through substantial increase in local revenues and the participation of citizens.

The project showed how this new concept in urban development has built a bridge between the people and the pourashava councils who were elected to serve the people. As the pourashava local governments improved service provision, the residents responded by showing more interest in demanding even better facilities. The pourashavas supported by the UGIIP-II is showing the way for other municipalities outside the project as to how govern and provide better services. Their

efficiency in tax collection improved a great deal, staffs were trained to use computers in issuing trade licenses and water bills. The streets in these pourashavas became cleaner, with trucks (procured with project funds) collecting garbage from homes. Community residents in the project pourashavas are more aware of their responsibilities and eager to visit their pourashava local governments to express their opinions as well. Finally, the lessons of the project informed other municipalities, outside the project, to look towards the participating pourashavas as models to emulate planned and responsive urbanization.

Lessons of Second Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement Project (UGIIP-II)

The UGIIP-II brought about many changes in ways that pourashavas were run in Bangladesh. The governed – not only the wealthy but also the slum dwellers – now have a say in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of development programs. This paradigm shift in the governance of the UGIIP-II assisted pourashavas is emulated by many other pourashavas not covered under the UGIIP-II. The following are the major lessons from the implementation experience of the two phases of the UGIIP-II:

- The principal achievement of UGIIP-II is that it has proved that a performance-based project design can indeed be implemented, as evidenced by the overall satisfactory response of the participating pourashavas to performance based project rules. Therefore, the transformation of project rules from infrastructure provision to governance lead infrastructure provision was indeed possible and desirable. This set out a significant change in governmental fiscal relations relating to urban development and management. The governance improvements sought to address a wide range of areas simultaneously from participation to financial to administrative. The design of the urban governance improvements was innovative even in the wake of pre-committed resources to the pourashavas. Stakeholders agreed to the governance milestones and some even welcomed these as an opportunity to correct their shortcomings.
- Governance lead infrastructure provision needed the support of good quality and timely capacity building input. It was also demonstrated that the front loading of capacity development helps greatly in enhancing the preparedness of the pourashavas.

- The considerable quantitative progress achieved in a relatively short period of time showed that it is possible for the pourashavas to adapt to a new body of practice in a short time. There were some difficulties but, in many cases, pourashavas were able to complete the activities and reach the milestones.
- The performances of pourashavas were particularly good and durable in areas where indicators were objective and indicative of achieving the expected output. For instance, financial measures were easy to comprehend and measure for both the pourashavas and the project performance evaluators. This also suggested that performance milestones needed to be as output-oriented as possible.
- Pourashavas took greater ownership and interest in areas where their legitimacy and performance of core functions in the local public eye improved more immediately. They were less enthusiastic in areas where results were less obvious. For example, convening Town Level Coordination Committee (TLCC) meetings is a high profile activity that easily caught the imagination of pourashava leadership. On the other hand, leaders were less passionate about the preparation of base maps, despite their critical importance for sound development planning.

Md. Nurullah, Superintending Engineer (Urban Management) of LGED, summed up the lessons learned from UGIIP-II when he said, “the concept has already become an urban development model for its effective implementation and acceptance by the development practitioners, municipal authority, civil society, and urban dwellers. What has made the project a beauty are governance improvement, citizen participation and sustainability. More so, the model can be replicated in other densely populated countries with a cultural context similar to that of Bangladesh” (ADB, 2012).

Innovative Special Initiatives of Sreemangal Pourashava

Sreemangal Pourashava is located in Sylhet division and is one of the thirty-five chosen pourashavas of the UGIIP-II. It was selected as one of the five model pourashavas for the third phase of UGIIP-II by successfully fulfilling all required criterion. Lessons learned from the UGIIP-II, the pourashava undertook some innovative and special initiatives on its own which was admired by the Project Management Office (PMO), LGED. The following are the Innovative and Special Initiatives of Sreemangal Pourashava.

Innovative Initiative 01: Formation of Savings Mobilization Samity at SIC

There are 9 SICs (Slum Improvement Committee) in Sreemangal Pourashava located in 7 out of 9 wards. They were mostly located around the railway station. Labor Colony of Ward 6 is just close to the railway station. Inhabitants of this colony are mostly evictees of river erosion in Chandpur district. Most of them work as laborer in Sreemangal Railway Station and their relatives followed them seeking better life. They seemed more aware of their socio-economic life and as many of their children now attend schools. However, women of this colony are mostly dependent on their husbands' incomes. They remained idle after finishing household chores. They were targeted to involve them in economic activities and generate their own resources. In the process an initiative was taken to form Cooperatives like organization involving Primary Group (PG) members of the SIC mentioned. In the course of forming small savings mobilization organization several discussion meetings were held and community people were motivated to get enrolled voluntarily.

With support of respective ward councilor and female councilor finally PG members formed a cooperative "**Labor Colony Akota Sanchoy Samity**" covering two Primary Groups (PGs). They now have a bank account of with Rupaly Bank where they deposit their small savings. There are 19 members holding 30 shares. Share holders deposit Tk 20 each every

Formation of Savings Mobilization Samity at SIC



Photo 01: Labor Colony Akota Sanchoy Samity, Ward No.6



Photo 02: Ledger book, Bank Cheque Book and Deposit Slip

week. This is organized and controlled by an executive committee encompassing five members.

Innovative Initiative 02: Supplying New Vans to the Community Based Organizations (CBOs)

There are 4766 households (BBS, 2011) in Sreemangal Pourashava. These households inhabit in the 9 wards of the pourashava. In the early stage of UGIIP-II, 9 CBOs were formed in the 9 wards. To collect kitchen and solid waste, aiming to keep the city clean and environment friendly, all CBOs were provided with 9 Vans from the project fund. However, most Vans depreciated quickly requiring urgent repair which was almost near about purchasing price. Old vans could not collect waste. This was a worrying situation and CBOs executive members demanded new vans from their respective councilors and TLCC members addressing the importance of Waste Management by CBOs, the Pourashava Authority (Mayor in Particular) decided to supply new Vans from its own revenue fund. Within a few days new vans were handed over to respective CBOs presidents. This prompt initiative will forged an amiable relationship between CBOs and the Municipality and further enhance the Community Based Waste Management System.



Photo 03: New Vans for CBOs

Innovative Initiative 03: Special Funding to CBOs to hold Quarterly Meeting

General meetings were organized at the pourashava to discuss the problems and prospects of the CBOs. These meeting were attended by the CBOs presidents and secretaries, respective ward councilors with Mayor in the chair. CBO presidents and secretaries



Photo 04: Meeting with CBOs members

raised issues e.g. need for support from the pourashava to include more households in the waste management system, subscription collection from CBO members, and financial support from the pourashava to keep waste collection vans operating and conducting regular CBO meeting. Following these demands, the Mayor announced that all CBOs were to receive Tk 700/- each for holding regular meeting from its own revenue fund. This is in addition to yearly funding of Tk 6000/- each. All CBOs are getting this support and quarterly meetings have started from June, 2013. It is a good sign that Pourashava and Community leaders have realized to keep CBO activities on-going, particularly that of collecting household wastes by vans. The Sreemangal Pourashava have taken a remarkable step by providing honorarium to the Ward Level Coordination Committee (WLCC) members from its own fund aiming to accelerate the community based activities and to promote the CBOs activities. Therefore, it is seen that with processes of support from Pourashava Community Development, community participation and CBOs will be functional and sustainable even after UGIIP-II cease to be.

Innovative Initiative 04: Setting Nari Corner (Women Corner) at Pourashava

Sreemangal Pourashava has set up a Nari corner at its office with popular slogan of “Educated Mother, Educated Children, and Educated Nation”. Nari Corner is well set up with facilities, e.g. desk, chairs, water filter, and separated toilet. One staff has been assigned to deal with and to provide services based on demand. Now women from the pourashava are encouraged to visit the Nari Corner and share their problems. It is seen that women and girls mostly come for health services and birth certificates; they wait at the Nari Corner and are attended by pourashava officials to deliver necessary services. Women visitors are please with the separate facilities they were provided. Other than this Gender Committee meeting, Immunization, Family planning services and other health services are provided from this center. Women also lodge complaints regarding gender based violence or any other complaints. Pourashava Mayor has shown positive views in the outcome of this initiative. It has also been highly praised by the community people. It is hoped that such an initiative will help to reduce gender gap and provide services to the citizen especially women and girls.



Photo 05: Pourashava Nari Corner

Innovative Initiative 05: Shisu Bikas Program

People living in the slum area lead very deplorable life where children are most vulnerable to any natural and socio-economic calamities. Specially, children in the slum areas suffer from ill-health, lack of education and entertainment facilities which are very much important for their physical and mental growth. An initiative for this reason was been taken up to orient, encourage and educate them about health and hygiene through simulation and stimulating game. As part of this initiative, a program namely ‘**Shisu Bikas**’ was taken up with the support of Slum Development Officer at Labor Colony (a slum of Ward 6) on 24th of June, 2013 which include different events like recitation, competition on general knowledge, and education on nutrition, health and hygiene. About 13 children, of whom 5 were girls, took part in the program. They were enthusiastic, encouraged and participated spontaneously. Such programs ended with distribution of prizes. The president of SIC opined that it was first event of its kind in



Picture 06: A girl takes part at General Knowledge Competition.

Picture 07: Price giving ceremony at the end of competition

their slum and if it continues children would grow with sound mental and physical health. It is expected new programs will be taken up for other slums. It is expected that such initiatives may open up new horizons for the slum children in the future.

Conclusion

Second Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement Project has brought new development paradigm for the Sreemangal Pourashava. The project introduced new

participatory development approach which integrated the public from all strata of the society. The project played significant role in infrastructure improvement as well as good governance. It provided different assistance in different phases to achieve the desired objectives. The UGIIP-II, made all the selected pourashavas self-reliant. The project is acting as a driving force for development in the municipal area as well. The lessons of UGIIP-II are that good intention, motivation, perseverance and search for innovative and special initiatives can pave the way to improved development by way of good governance and peoples' participation.

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