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Submitted by

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List of Acronyms

CSC	Capacity Strengthening Component
CST	Capacity Strengthening Team
DC	Deputy Commissioner
DO	REOPA-CST District Officer
EC	European Commission
FEC	Financial Evaluation Committee
LFA	Logical Framework Analysis
LGI	Local Government Institution
LGD	Local Government Division
LGSP	Local Government Support Project
LIC	Learning and Innovation Component
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MIS	Management Information System
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-government Organization
NILG	National Institute of Local Government
PMC	Project Management Committee
PNGO	Partner Non-government Organization
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PTF	Project Task Force
REOPA	Rural Employment Opportunities for Public Assets
RMP	Rural Maintenance Programme
SIC	Scheme Implementation Committee
SLGSP	Sirajganj Local Governance Support Project
TAP	Technical & Administrative Provision
TEC	Technical Evaluation Committee
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UP	Union Parishad
URC	Upazila REOPA Committee
WCG	Women Crew Group

Executive Summary

Some important breakthrough has been made in PNGO selection, baseline survey and launching web based M&E/MIS during this quarter, which will gear project implementation towards reaching optimum level.

In the course of ongoing replacement and rectification of WCG member selection totally 240 crew members have been replaced as of this quarter. Because of these replacements and rectifications, the profile of WCG member has changed somewhat. More than 90% women are widowed, abandoned, divorced or separated. About 9.41% of the crew women have a husband who cannot work. Of the 1096 disabled husbands there are 323 (29%) old men and 258 (24%) physically handicapped.

Block grant schemes for Public Asset Creation and Rehabilitation were identified in last quarter, but in the changed situation particularly with launching of 100 days employment scheme UPs are revising list of schemes for better utilization of grant money. According to the revised list as of this quarter a total of 1,117 schemes have been identified. Of the identified schemes 728 (65.2%) are road repair schemes, 178 (15.9%) are school/madrasa repair schemes and 99 (8.9%) are mosque/temple repair schemes.

Orientation training of PMC and URC members has been completed in all districts except Sirajganj. The training programme of Sirajganj will be completed by first week of November 2008. A total of 1549 PMC members and 166 URC members have been given training so far, covering 84.4% of PMC members including UP Chairmen and 86.5% targeted URC members of five districts.

The TEC and FEC comprising representatives of LGD, PTF, EC and UNDP were formed to evaluate the proposals of intended organizations to be PNGOs. The TEC and FEC have identified the highest ranked NGO in each district to be awarded contract. EC, UNDP, PTF and LGD have endorsed highest ranked NGOs. PNGO selection has been completed in October 2008.

As of 31 July 2008 a total of €2,070,930 (\$ 3,225,748) has been disbursed to the Union Parishad's Road Maintenance Account for crew wages for the period up to 10 November 2008. A total of €543,197 (\$ 846,101) has also been disbursed to Union Parishads for block grants under Public Asset Creation and Rehabilitation Schemes. The total delivery cost during the year as of 30 September 2008 is €3,123,113.45 (\$ 4,864,662.69), which means that 100% of the 1st prefinancing and 86.55% of the 2nd prefinancing received from EC have been utilized.

The expenditure trend indicates that REOPA-CST will run out of funds in November 2008, as another deposit of around €430,000 for WCG wages will have to be made and €70,000 initial advance for the selected PNGOs selected will have to be paid, with another €48,400 needed for the Service Delivery Block Grants to be paid to the 88 UPs selected for 2008, as well as the fund needed for the operations of the CST. Therefore, in order to ensure smooth and uninterrupted delivery by REOPA-CST, it is essential that remaining EC funds for the year requested as the 3rd pre-financing payment are received in UNDP accounts at the earliest.

Section I: Context

The key developments and issues related to the subject area in Bangladesh:

Bangladesh has made considerable headway towards reducing poverty. The poverty rate has gone down by almost 19 points since the beginning of 1990s. However, the incidence of poverty is still as high as 40% and majority of the poor, around 83%, live in rural areas¹. The poor and other groups are also vulnerable (in terms of variance in income or loss of human capital) as a result of life cycle events (e.g. seasonal employment, sickness, age) and climatic shocks affecting a community (e.g. floods, cyclone). Even if Bangladesh achieves the MDG goal of halving the poverty rate of 1991-92 by 2015, the extent of poverty/vulnerability would still be significant and, in absolute terms, the numbers would remain high. Recognizing the challenges ahead, the government has emphasized social protection as a pillar of the PRSP. The government aims at developing effective social protection policies and programmes to address poverty and vulnerability of its population.

In the field of poverty alleviation, particularly in the rural context, the interventions of the Government have been emphasizing the multidimensional aspect of poverty and the need to address this issue on different fronts and with unremitting vigour². Some of the key issues focused by the Government which have significant relevance for the REOPA Project are: Building on Past Achievements, Preventing Slippages, Bringing Employment and the Meso-Economy to the Centre Stage, Strengthening the Focus on Women's Achievement, Strengthening Connectivity, Making Governance Work for the Poor, and Risk, Vulnerability and Social Protection.

In addition, an Eight Strategic Agenda has been drawn up in which the priority is what REOPA Project aims to address: *employment* followed by *local governance* among the listed topics. It is noteworthy to mention here that Bangladesh faces a triple challenge in building a road map for accelerated poverty reduction: build on past experiences, address the multi-dimensional nature of poverty through a choice of priorities and unlock the agency potential of the nation through an optimal mix of public action, private initiatives and community mobilization. This comprises some key issues which are included within REOPA Project's primary objectives as follows: implementation of *safety net measure* to protect the poor, especially women, against anticipated and unanticipated income shocks, *human development of the poor* for raising their capability through education and training and access to resources, *participation and empowerment of the poor*, promoting *good governance* and improving *service delivery* as well as caring for *environment*.

Description of the key objectives and output of the project:

Against this backdrop, the Government of Bangladesh decided to start a new project named Rural Employment Opportunities for Public Assets (REOPA) as a social protection programme based on the learning of Rural Maintenance Programme (RMP) and Sirajgonj Local Government Support Programme (SLGSP). The overall objective of REOPA is to contribute to the long term sustainable socioeconomic development of rural Bangladesh. Therefore, REOPA will contribute to poverty alleviation in rural areas and

¹ Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2005 and SVRS 2001-06, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics

² Government of Bangladesh, (2005), "**Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper**," Ministry of Planning, Dhaka.

mainstreaming women into development programs as indicated in the PRSP and Bangladesh's commitment to the MDGs.

On EC's request, UNDP through the Capacity Strengthening Component (CSC) of REOPA Project will be providing technical support to the Government for its management. Details of this Component have been highlighted in the Description of the Action of the Contribution Agreement "REOPA-CSC"-FOOD/2006/120581.

The REOPA Project is being implemented in six districts of Bangladesh, i.e. Barguna, Feni, Habigonj, Narsingdi, Satkhira and Sirajgonj, which are in six different administrative divisions, i.e. Barisal, Chittagong, Sylhet, Dhaka, Khulna and Rajshahi respectively. The project covers all 388 Unions of 41 Upazilas of these districts. About 24,000 individual disadvantaged people and around 120,000 household members will be benefited from the project.

The REOPA Project aims to synthesize the three main components of RMP, namely: maintenance of rural infrastructure, income diversification and capacity development of LGIs with the primary objective of poverty alleviation. This is proposed to be achieved through the identification and implementation of appropriate employment generation geared towards road maintenance, as well as creation/rehabilitation of rural infrastructures that will simultaneously contribute to pro-poor development of rural individuals and communities along with a strong emphasis on the institutional strengthening of LGIs to integrate a participatory approach for achieving the Project's primary goals. Thus REOPA Project is in essence pro-poor, gender-sensitive and committed towards the promotion of good governance at grassroots level.

The overall development objective of REOPA Project is to contribute to sustainable socio-economic development of rural Bangladesh. It proposes to achieve this by contributing to poverty alleviation in the rural areas and bringing women into mainstream development programmes/schemes in line with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), Government of Bangladesh and the Government's commitment to the achievement of the MDGs.

The two parallel and interrelated *development purposes* of the REOPA Project are:

Purpose 1: Socio-economic conditions and food security of REOPA Project's individual beneficiaries are improved and sustained;

Purpose 2: Social, economic and environment conditions of rural communities, especially of the poor are improved through pro-poor investment;

Main Expected Results of REOPA Project

The main envisaged results of the REOPA Project are:

For Purpose 1:

- a) *Result 1.1:* REOPA Project's individual beneficiaries have improved their financial conditions through more regular incomes, increased savings and are engaged in income-generating activities.

- b) *Result 1.2:* REOPA Project's individual beneficiaries and their dependents have improved their human capital in terms of nutrition, health, education, social recognition and voice.

For Purpose 2:

- c) *Result 2.1:* Public assets improving social conditions (such as village schools, latrines, dispensaries, etc.), promoting economic growth (such as rural earthen roads, village markets, irrigation systems, etc.) and enhancing environment conditions (such as waste and sanitary management systems, including composting, cleaning of and improvement of sewage systems, drainage systems, tree plantations, etc.) are maintained and developed for the benefit of the poor of the participating communities.
- d) *Result 2.2:* More basic services (such as veterinary and agriculture services) effectively and efficiently delivered to the poor of the participating rural communities.

Section II: Activities Carried Out During the Reporting Period

Some important breakthrough has been made in PNGO selection, baseline survey and launching web based M&E/MIS during this quarter, which will gear project implementation towards reaching optimum level. Achievements against work plan 2008 as of this quarter are summarised below.

Table 1: Plan and Achievement against AWP 2008

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Plan</i>	<i>Achievement</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Completion of report on Training Needs Assessment for LGI Officials	√	√	Final report submitted in June 2008.
Finalization of Operational Manual	√	√	Having the Operational Manual in queue for formal endorsement, the REOPA management has decided to start training of Upazila REOPA Committees and PMCs on operational procedures of REOPA as delineated in the manual. Translation of the manual into Bengali was completed in September, and the translated manual was vetted by LGD in October. Pending printing of the manual, scheduled in November, PMC/URC training has disseminated its contents.
National Level Inception Workshop at Dhaka	√		Project management has reassessed the necessity, and a workshop to launch LGI training was arranged instead, on 24.7.08.
Capacity Strengthening of LGIs	√		Orientation training on project policy and procedures for PMC and URC has been completed in all districts except Sirajganj. Training of Sirajganj will also be completed by 1 st week of November 2008.
PNGO Selection	√		PNGOs for all districts of REOPA have been selected by PNGO selection committee in September 2008. EC, UNDP and PTF/LGD have endorsed the selection. Contract will be signed with all selected NGOs by November 2008.
Disbursement to PNGOs	√		PNGOs selected only in September 2008.
Commencement of Road Maintenance Component	√	√	Road maintenance work actually started on 15 Feb. instead of 1 Feb. 2008 due to delay of government order.

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Plan</i>	<i>Achievement</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Training to WCG	√		PNGOs are supposed to provide training.
Wage Payment to WCG	€706,168 \$ 1,099,950	€706,168 \$ 1,099,950	Disbursed to UPs during the year is €2,070,930.
Identification of Public Asset Block Grant Schemes	388 UPs	388 UPs	A total of 1117 schemes have been identified in 388 UPs.
Disbursement of Block Grants for Public Assets	€543,200 \$ 846,106	€543,197 \$ 846,101	Utilization of grant started in September 2008.
Identification of Block Grant Schemes for Basic Service Delivery	88 UPs	0 UPs	Schemes for Basic Service Delivery will be identified in last quarter of 2008 as DOs-CST are currently overburdened with Road Maintenance and Public Asset Scheme activities in the absence of PNGOs. 88 UPs have been selected and scheme selection has started (completed in one district), after PMC/URC orientation training.
Preparation of Information Briefs	√	√	It is planned to publish the information briefs by last quarter of 2008.
Designing M&E and MIS System	√	√	M&E/MIS System has been developed and launching of web based M&E/MIS is underway. Full-fledged implementation of it will be started as soon as the PNGOs are on board to supply data.
Baseline Survey	√		EC has approved the methodology and budget for baseline survey. Bids have been invited from competent firms and it is expected that the survey will be completed by December 2008.
Induction Training to PNGOs	√		It will be conducted after signing contract with selected PNGOs (scheduled for late November).
Monthly and Quarterly Progress Reports	√	√	As per plan.

As per section 4.3 of the EC/UNDP Contribution Agreement, REOPA-CST will perform certain specified tasks. These are delineated in the table below, against achievements, for duties during the implementation period as well as remaining duties pertaining to the inception period.

Table 2: Tasks of REOPA-CST and achievements

Tasks as per Contribution Agreement	Achievement
Assist in monitoring how adequately REOPA addresses crosscutting issues (e.g. gender equality, environment)	At the outset, gender empowerment issues have been included in baseline survey parameters. CST will follow up achievements against the baseline established as the project progresses into a more mature stage. CST also plans to monitor the extent of any negative environment impact of roads maintained by WCGs, or roads repaired under block grants.
Look for innovative interventions relevant to the effectiveness of REOPA	Initial discussions on introducing sanitary latrines, eco-toilets and energy-saving cooking stoves under the basic service delivery component have taken place. CST has identified the sustainable livelihoods approach as relevant for planning post-maintenance activities of WCG women. Tree plantation has been introduced under both block grant components.
Assist in monitoring the extent to which the assumptions of REOPA are realized	An MIS has recently been established. Full monitoring will be possible only after PNGO deployment and when the project has reached a more mature stage.
Ensure coordination with other organizations working in the same field	Coordination established with LGSP-LIC and Vulnerable Group Development for the Ultra-Poor (VGDUP) through a series of meetings.
Assist the EC in setting up the external monitoring and evaluation system	No action has as yet been taken. As such, EC will have to take the initiative by specifying assistance required. It is expected that external monitoring will begin in 2009 (mid-term review, etc.).
Report to UNDP on monthly, quarterly and annual basis and UNDP will subsequently submit report to EC with copy to GoB	Reporting undertaken as required.
Review relevant documents elaborated during the former phases of RMP such as the RMP Operation Manual; and training material used by RMP and other programmes with a training component targeting the same type of beneficiaries	The RMP Operational Manual has been the major guideline in preparing the REOPA manual. All training material of RMP has been reviewed and most of it will be used in REOPA (permission from CARE obtained), as well as training materials provided by VGDUP.
Set up the internal monitoring systems, including periodical auditing and baseline surveys	CST has completed most activities pertaining to design of integrated M&E/MIS system for REOPA. A system of working advances, to be continuously accounted for, for disbursement to and expenditure of REOPA-CST District Officers has been introduced. Baseline survey methodology has been prepared, but the survey is delayed, deferred to last quarter of 2008.
Assist in the drafting of an Operational Manual describing project activities and modus operandi	A draft of the Operational Manual was completed in July 2008. Translation of the manual into Bengali was completed in September 2008 (currently being vetted by LGD).
Propose revision, if any, for the Logframe of REOPA	The Logframe has been revised in June 2008, for both REOPA as a whole and for REOPA-CST.
Assist in the drafting of a modus operandi for coordination with SLGDP and/or LGSP	Coordination meetings with LGSP-LIC have been held, dovetailing training plans. Further coordination plans are on the agenda, but a limitation observed is that LIC plans to cover 388 REOPA UPs only in a phased manner.
Assist in preparing the NGO Call for Proposals according to UNDP Procurement Rules and Procedures	A revised Request for Proposals has been issued by UNDP and six PNGOs have been selected as further described in this report (Section IV).

Some of the major activities of the project have been going on in full swing since February 2008. As the key implementer at field level, UPs are carrying out all responsibilities of implementation. In spite of inadequate orientation on project strategy and policies and in the absence of PNGOs they have accomplished a good job so far. However, without the support of PNGOs and inadequate technical guidance on project strategy and policies some finer points of project strategy were missed during the implementation process and some important activities like training of WCG members, community mobilization and advocacy for project beneficiaries are yet to take place for project implementation at optimum level. Some weaknesses were also observed during the field visit of EC, REOPA-PTF and REOPA-CST in road identification, block grant scheme identification, WCG selection and project document maintenance, especially financial documents. Utmost necessity has been felt for orienting PMCs and Upazila REOPA Committees (URC) on project modalities and policies, providing more technical support to UPs and deploying PNGOs at field to bring full compliance of project activities with project strategy and policies. In order to address these persisting needs, REOPA-CST has undertaken orientation training on project policy and procedures for PMC and URC members, extensive field visit has been carried out by District Officers, REOPA-CST and selection of PNGOs has been endorsed by EC, UNDP and PTF/LGD during this reporting period.

Activities of DOs, REOP-CST:

The DOs of REOPA-CST have been engaged in different ongoing activities like field visits for providing technical support, monitoring project activities, orientation training to PMCs and URCs, facilitating field visits etc. during this reporting period, in order to keep project activities on track towards achieving expected results. Glimpses of their activities during this quarter are described below:

Project Activities Monitoring:

DOs have monitored different activities particularly road maintenance work in this reporting quarter. During monitoring visits at UPs they shared their findings with UPs and provided on-the-job training to UP Secretaries and PMC members on how to maintain and update cash book, women salary register, pass book, roadwork register etc. It has been observed in their monitoring that WCGs attended their work on time and community members are satisfied with their work. At the time of monitoring visits the DOs informed 8580 crew women of 250 UPs on rights, responsibilities, rules and regulation of road maintenance work. The DOs have also visited 36 block grant schemes. They also visited the banks where REOPA accounts are maintained, checked the ledger and passbooks and shared the findings with respective bank managers.

Training to PMC and URC Members:

It is crucial to orient PMC and URC members on project policy and procedures for proper and efficient implementation. In order to enhance the capacity of PMC and URC members, REOPA-CST has started an extensive training programme since August 2008. The DOs played a key role in organising the training in their respective districts. Training has already been completed in all districts except Sirajganj. Training programme in Sirajgonj district is ongoing, scheduled to be completed by first week of November.

Block Grant Scheme Identification and Finalization:

District Officers (DOs) have a crucial role to provide technical support to identify proper schemes for block grants in consultation and coordination with community members, UPs and Upazila REOPA Committees as per the guideline of REOPA Project. During this reporting quarter DOs worked with UPs and SICs for revision and finalization of different schemes under block grant for public assets and basic service delivery to ensure compliance of project policies and strategy.

Facilitation of Field Visit of EC, LGD and UNDP:

During this reporting quarter (including October) officials from EC, LGD, UNDP and students from HOSEI University, Tokyo, Japan paid visits to REOPA in all six districts. During the visits respective DOs made all necessary logistical arrangement and accompanied visitors.

Participation in Coordination Meeting at District and Upazila Level:

DOs are members of different committees such as DDC, UDCC, NGO Coordination Committee at District and Upazila level. They attend all coordination committee meetings on a regular basis and provide updated information on project progress to the committees.

Distribution of Project Materials:

During the reporting quarter DOs ensured timely and proper distribution of project money and materials, e.g. DD for crew wage and block grants, bicycles, computers, WCG uniforms at Upazila and UP level.

WCG Profile Preparation:

DOs collected detailed information on replaced WCG members from UPs under his/her district to construct a updated profile of WCG members. In this connection they also reviewed the selection process of WCG and if they found any irregularities they immediately asked the concerned PMC to rectify it.

Table 3: Distribution of work days by District Officers in July-September 2008

	<i>Districts</i>						<i>Total</i>
	Barguna	Feni	Narsingdi	Habiganj	Satkhira	Sirajganj	
<i>Field Visits</i>	30	32	34	30	31	22	179
<i>Meetings</i>	15	14	14	6	12	9	70
<i>Desk Work</i>	16	23	19	25	16	21	120
Total Workdays	69	69	72	72	69	67	418

It has been reported that DOs have spent most of their time, i.e. 179 days (42.8% of total workdays), in field visit for project activities like monitoring and coaching PMCs. A substantial volume of time was spent on desk work (120 days) and meeting with project stakeholders (70 days). It has also been reported that DOs utilized 22 days weekends/holidays for project work to cover additional work load in the absence of PNGOs.

Orientation Training to PMC and URC Members:

It was observed during visits of the EC Delegation, REOPA-PTF and REOPA-CST to Union Parishads that in a number of cases the selection of Women Crew Groups and selection of the earthen roads was not completed fully in line with project policy and criteria. The main reason behind improper selection of crew members and roads is that

Union Parishads and PMCs do not have full understanding of project policy and principles pertaining to criteria of crew member and road selection, in the absence of an approved Operational Manual. It is crucial to orient Union Parishads and PMCs on the policy and principles of the project in all aspects. In order to address these shortcomings REOPA-CST has started an extensive orientation training programme on policies and procedures of REOPA for all PMC and URC members since August 2008. The orientation curriculum includes background and objectives of REOPA, Implementation Process of REOPA, Roles and Responsibilities of Different Stakeholders, Monitoring and Reporting Modalities and Bank Account Operating System and Fund Flow.

Table 4: Training Participants by District

	<i>Upazila REOPA Committee (URC)</i>			<i>Project Management Committee (PMC)</i>		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
<i>Barguna</i>	23	7	30	160	35	195
<i>Feni</i>	24	8	32	189	56	245
<i>Habiganj</i>	31	8	39	257	122	379
<i>Narsingdi</i>	26	9	35	201	133	335
<i>Satkhira</i>	25	5	30	283	112	395
<i>Sirajganj</i>	Training is ongoing					
Total	129	37	166	1090	458	1549

Orientation training has been completed in all districts except Sirajganj. The training programme of Sirajganj will be completed by first week of November 08. A total of 1549 PMC members and 166 URC members have been given training so far, covering 84.4% of PMC members including UP Chairmen and 86.5% targeted URC members.

The training was launched through a workshop on 24 July 2008, with the Secretary-LGD as Chief Guest, the Senior Adviser UNDP as Special Guest and Director General NILG as Guest of Honour. During the plenary session, all working groups by and large endorsed training materials developed, but put forward some recommendations on the basis of their experience. About fifty participants attended, including DDLGs, UNOs, UP Chairmen, PMC Members, REOPA-PTF and REOPA-CST headquarters and district staff.

Road Maintenance Work:



Maintenance of rural earthen roads in all 388 Unions of REOPA Project has been going on in full swing since 15 February 2008. Commencement of road maintenance work by WCGs was planned to start from 1st February, but work actually started 15 February 2008 due to delay in issue of government circular for road maintenance. Project Management Committees at UP level are assigning and acknowledging the task to the WCGs on fortnightly basis.

Apart from the road maintenance work, crew members were engaged during the monsoon in field raising, tree plantation, repairing drainage system, bush cleaning of UP complex in Satkhira, Sirajganj and Barguna districts where roads were inundated by monsoon water.

The District Officers of REOPA-CST have visited Union Parishads on sample basis and observed that generally WCGs have achieved their road maintenance work targets satisfactorily. However, in terms of quality of the road maintenance work, the District Officers observed that in some cases there was some lacking in meeting the quality of work. Neither the WCG members nor the PMC know all the criteria and techniques of quality road maintenance.

At this moment it is essential to train the WCGs and PMCs on the techniques and criteria of road maintenance as soon as possible for ensuring the quality of road maintenance work. While the supervisory role of PMCs and Upazila Committees is being strengthened by ongoing CST training, PNGOs will train the WCGs in road maintenance once they are deployed.

Profile of Crew Women:

Crew members were recruited under road maintenance component in December 07 and since 15 February 2008 they have been working for maintenance of selected rural earthen roads. In the absence of an Operational Manual and with a short notice for WCG selection PMCs were not able to select crew members in full compliance with project policy. Some of the finer criteria for crew member selection were overlooked during selection process in many UPs of several REOPA districts. Later on during field visits of EC Delegation, REOPA-PTF and REOPA-CST, it was identified that some crew members had not met the criteria of WCG member selection. The District Officers of REOPA-CST undertook rigorous field visits to ensure project policy compliance in WCG member selection during the preceding and current reporting quarter. As a result of this endeavour, as well as due to resignation and termination of WCG members, a good number of crew women have been replaced as of this reporting quarter.

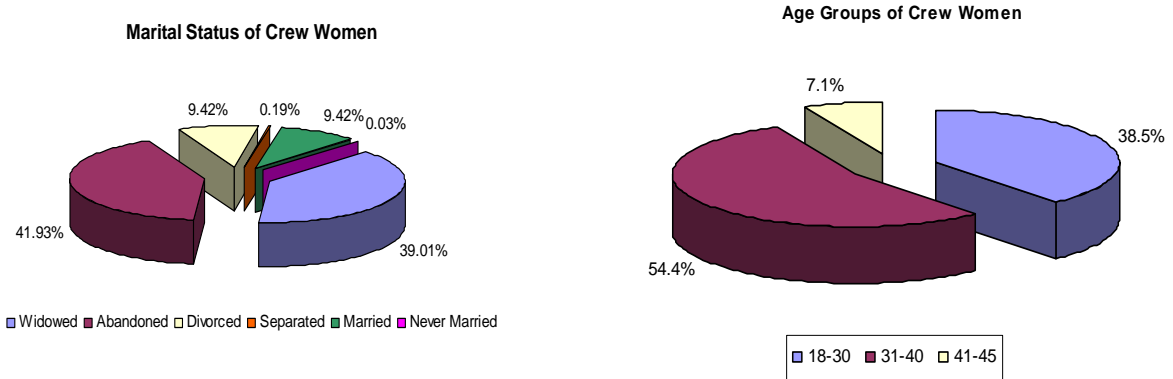
Table 5: Change Status of WCG Members by District

District	Change Status		Total
	Yes	No	
Barguna	2	1138	1140
Feni	47	1243	1290
Narsingdi	43	2057	2100
Habiganj	134	2176	2310
Satkhira	14	2326	2340
Sirajganj	0	2460	2460
Total	240	11400	11640

It has been reported that totally 240 crew members have been replaced so far. The highest number of crew members, i.e. 134, have been replaced in Habiganj, followed by Feni with 47 crew members, Narsingdi with 43 crew members, Satkhira with 14 crew members and Barguna with 2 crew members. Nevertheless, replacement of crew member is an ongoing process as sometimes crew women resign from the job for personal reasons and sometimes PMCs terminate crew member as a disciplinary measure. However,

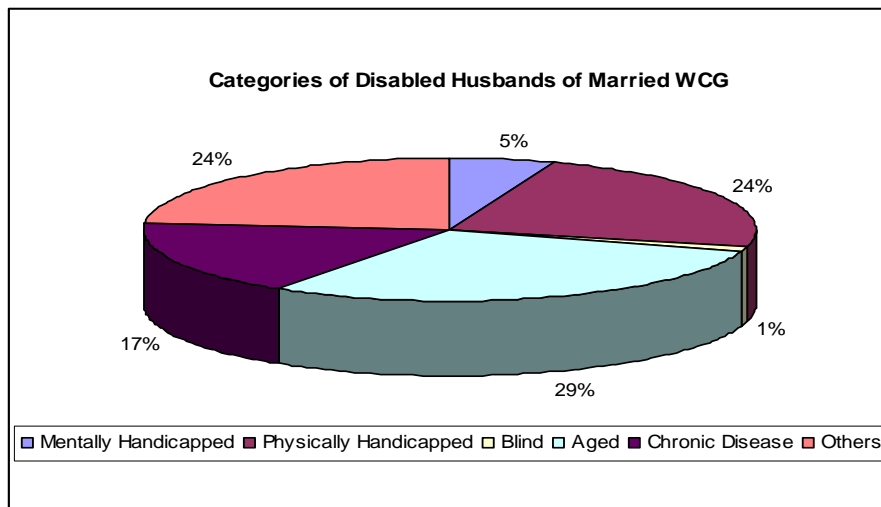
REOPA project management and PNGOs should keep eye on the matter, so that no injustice is inflicted on the WCG members.

Because of these replacements, the profile of WCG member has changed somewhat.



According to the updated crew member list 39.01% are widowed, 41.93% abandoned, 9.42% divorced, 9.42% married and 0.19% separated.

While investigating the case of married women with disabled husband it has been observed that there is no consistent age pattern among the married crew members. However, most of the women are aged between 18 and 40 which is highly fertile age group for carrying child. Considering this fact Maternal and Child Health (MCH) could be included in the upcoming training curriculum for crew members. A good number of young married crew members were found in Feni and Sirajgonj who are married to aged husbands. Especially in Feni it has been observed that young girls of the Hindu community married old men to spare their parents from the curse of dowry.



Of the 1096 married women 323 (29%) were found married to an old husband and 258 (24%) women are married to a physically handicapped husband.

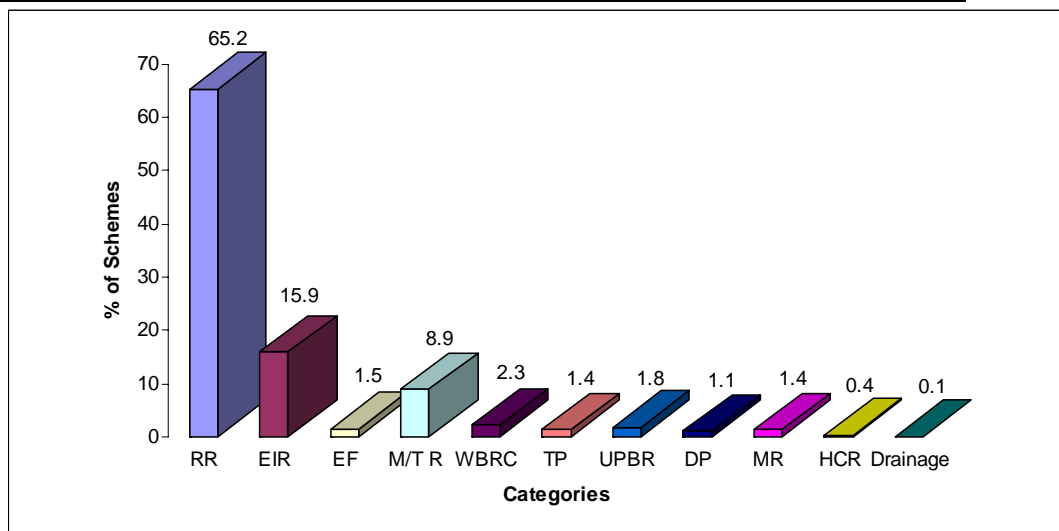
Public Asset Schemes:

With a view to creating employment opportunities for the casual labourers during the lean seasons through public assets creation and rehabilitation, labour intensive schemes have been selected based on community demand under Public Assets Creation and Rehabilitation component of REOPA.

Identification and preparation of list of public asset schemes by the Union Parishads has been completed in June 2008 (as per the work plan for January-December 2008). The list of public asset schemes has helped the Union Parishads to complete the preparatory activities for implementing the schemes within a short period of time, i.e. September to November 2008. Identification of public assets schemes was done through community consultation process by UP. Then a resolution from a UP meeting was submitted to the Upazila REOPA Committee, and committees approved schemes proposed by UPs. Nevertheless, in the absence of an Operational Manual in the field the range of schemes proposed is somewhat limited. The great majority of schemes are road repair, often as a result of last year's flood damage which has made this a priority of local people. In case of a very few schemes, it was obvious that the cost of casual labour could not possibly be 75% of the total scheme cost. These schemes have been replaced in consultation between REOPA-CST District Officers, UPs concerned and Upazila REOPA Committees.

Table 6: Type of Schemes Identified under Block Grant for Public Assets

<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Road Repair (RR)	728	65.2
Education Infrastructure Repair (EIR)	178	15.9
Mosque/Temple Repair (M/T R)	99	8.9
Water-body Re-excavation or Cleaning (WBRC)	26	2.3
Union Parishad Building Repair (UPBR)	20	1.8
Earth Filling (EF)	17	1.5
Tree Plantation (TP)	16	1.4
Market Rehabilitation (MR)	16	1.4
Disaster Prevention (DP)	12	1.1
Health Care Centre Rehabilitation (HCR)	4	0.4
Drainage	1	0.1



The total number of schemes identified in all REOPA districts is 1117. The average cost per scheme is Tk. 51,829. There is a wide range of schemes, in terms of cost, identified by Union Parishads – Tk. 8,000 to 150,000. On an average 3 schemes were identified per Union, with a range of 1 to 14 schemes.

Table 7: Statistics of Public Assets Scheme Cost

Number of Schemes	1117
Average cost (BDT)	51,829
Median cost (BDT)	50,000
Std. Deviation	33968.61
Minimum cost (BDT)	8,000
Maximum cost (BDT)	150,000

Table 8: Number and Cost of Schemes

District	# of Schemes	Avg. Cost (Tk.)	Minimum Cost (Tk.)	Maximum Cost (Tk.)
Barguna	73	77,863	12,500	150,000
Feni	108	59,052	25,000	148,940
Habigonj	386	29,922	8,000	75,000
Narsingdi	217	48,253	20,000	90,000
Satkhira	197	58,935	17,000	148,940
Sirajgonj	136	89,705	25,000	150,000
Total	1117	51,829	8,000	150,000

Awareness raising campaign for block grants schemes was delayed due to the absence of PNGOs and approved Operational Manual in the field. Awareness raising is now imparted through ongoing orientation training of PMC and Upazila REOPA Committee members. As soon as the PNGOs are deployed in the field, awareness raising campaigns will be conducted parallel with implementation of public assets schemes. It is expected that awareness raising and implementation of block grant schemes will be completed within the planned time, i.e. by December 2008.

Basic Service Delivery Schemes:

The situation of basic service delivery schemes has been discussed in the EC/UNDP/CST/PTF coordination meeting on REOPA implementation on 16 June 2008 and delay in identification and implementation of basic service delivery scheme was accepted in the meeting. The District Officers of REOPA-CST are overburdened with different activities of Road Maintenance Component and Block Grants for Public Assets in the absence of PNGOs, which are envisaged to carry out monitoring activities that now have to be done by DOs. The PNGOs are further supposed to monitor and play a supportive role in implementation of Basic Service Delivery at Union level. Actual implementation of Basic Service Delivery schemes is, therefore, now scheduled for the last quarter of 2008.

The 88 UPs where Basic Service Delivery schemes will be implemented in 2008 have been identified. These are the 80 UPs pre-qualified by LSQP-LIC plus 8 Unions identified in consultation with Deputy Commissioners. A menu of potential basic services has been delineated as given below:

- a) Innovations in irrigation technology and use of fertilizer, crop protection and crop diversification;
- b) Improved variety of seeds and storage facilities;
- c) New techniques of veterinary services for improved health of livestock and poultry birds etc.
- d) Improved stock of fish fingerlings, remedies of fish disease;
- e) Improved cottage industries technologies;
- f) Innovative technology in sanitary and environment management.

M&E and MIS System:

The REOPA-CST has completed most activities pertaining to design of integrated M&E/MIS system for REOPA, which includes conceptual framework of M&E/MIS system for REOPA, performance indicators, performance measurement framework (PMF), information flow chart, data collection and entry formats, database structure. Some key information of the project has already been gathered, processed and stored in the database of REOPA. The full-fledged implementation of the M&E/MIS system will be launched as soon as the PNGOs are on board to provide additional information. The designing of website and web enabled MIS is under process. The Upazila REOPA Committee will be within the online network of web based M&E/MIS system of REOPA through the computers with internet connection supplied by PTF. REOPA-CST will provide training and technical assistance to Upazila MIS focal points on how to run and maintain the system.

Further fine-tuning of both MIS and M&E formats is under process, to fit them into the web enabled M&E/MIS system mentioned above, and final formats will be shared when fully ready. The data collection and reporting formats as prescribed in annexes of the Operational Manual are the basis for the MIS devised, with focus on input-to-output indicators. The M&E system includes all the parameters of the questionnaire and check list proposed for the Baseline Survey, as well as other output-to-outcome indicators of the project's Logical Framework Matrices. Due to the delays in both introducing the Operational Manual in the field and carrying out the Baseline Survey, comprehensive data are yet to be sourced through the systems devised.

Internal Control Framework:

The responsibility of preparing a complete internal control framework was entrusted to the then Financial Management Advisor of REOPA-CST but before finishing the task he resigned from the project. In this situation, former Team Leader of REOPA-CST took the responsibility to complete the task by April 2008. She also resigned from the project in March 2008, leaving the task incomplete. However, a system of working advances, to be continuously accounted for, for disbursement to and expenditure of REOPA-CST District Officers has been introduced. Further financial control mechanisms, like banking information format, are being developed and will be reported when they have been finalized.

Preparation of Information Briefs:

With a view to facilitating the capacity building and awareness raising of project stakeholders information briefs on Gender Mainstreaming, Health and Nutrition and Supply Chain have been prepared by REOPA-CST. The information briefs will be published within the remaining months of the year.

Section III: Visibility Actions

In accordance with the provision mentioned in Article-6 of Annex-II of agreement between EC and UNDP, steps have been taken to ensure EC visibility. There have been a number of news notices and articles published in national and local daily newspapers on district launching workshops, road maintenance work performed by WCGs, workshop on training materials development for Upazila REOPA Committees and PMCs, mentioning the activities financed by EC. A regular news bulletin has been produced by REOPA-CST, appearing on the project web site of UNDP. A project brief has also been prepared and put on the website of UNDP. The website is being continuously updated with news and events. Plans for more ambitious visibility actions are currently being worked out.

Section IV: Difficulties Encountered and Measures Taken to Overcome Problems

Although this reporting period is marked by breakthrough of some crucial activities for the steady implementation of the project towards achieving its objectives, sustained efforts are still required for implementation at optimum level. The project management of REOPA has promptly responded to constraints faced by the project and brought the issues to the knowledge of concerned authorities with proposals for a positive outcome.

PNGO Selection:

The PNGOs are supposed to facilitate implementation of REOPA activities pertaining to beneficiary training and monitoring at field level. Delay in finalization of PNGO selection has had an adverse impact on some of the key project activities, such as proper selection of roads and WCGs, training of crew members and monitoring of project activities, during several months of the current year.

In order to expedite PNGO selection and make it appropriate, UNDP has revisited the NGO selection process, involving LGD, the National Project Director and EC, inviting them to several meetings of the Technical Evaluation Committee to review the NGO selection process. The REOPA project management and UNDP have decided to redo the NGO selection, during the months of July-September 2008. EC and PTF have been involved in redrafting a new request for proposals. Requests have been sent to 89 NGOs with 24 formally qualified proposals received. The Technical Evaluation Committee and Financial Evaluation Committee comprising representatives of LGD, PTF, EC and UNDP were formed to evaluate the proposals of intended organizations. The technical and financial committees have identified highest ranked NGO in each district to award contract and EC, UNDP and PTF/LGD have endorsed highest ranked NGOs. PNGO selection has been completed in October 2008.

Increase of Crew Wage Rate:

The wage rate of similar other safety net projects in Bangladesh is way above the wage rate of REOPA and it has become extremely difficult for crew members to cope with soaring food prices. In these circumstances the REOPA crew members appealed to the management of REOPA to increase their wage rate, considering the market price.

In response to the appeal, EC has announced its intention to allocate additional fund through a complementary Contribution Agreement to finance increased crew wages up to a level of Tk. 100 per day.

Approval of the Operational Manual:

The Operational Manual has yet to be approved by the Project Steering Committee. In the absence of a manual, Project Management Committees (PMCs) at Union Parishad have been facing difficulties in properly implementing different activities of the project.

Incorporating feedback from EC and UNDP, REOPA-CST together with PTF has finalized the Operational Manual. The translation of the Operational Manual to Bengali has been completed and the translation is currently being vetted by LGD. Having the Operational Manual in the queue for formal endorsement by PSC, the REOPA project management has decided to impart training to the Upazila REOPA Committees and PMCs on the operational procedures of REOPA as delineated in the manual.

Change in Local Administration:

During this quarter major changes have taken place in local government administration. Deputy Commissioners of Sirajganj, Satkhira, Narsingdi, Feni and Habiganj district have been transferred. DDLGs of several districts have also been transferred. In Upazila administration a number of UNOs have been replaced by new officers. These government officials play an important role in project implementation and their transfer has had negative effect on project implementation to some extent. Further, a number of positions of UP Secretary have remained vacant for a long time.

In the changed situation DOs, REOPA-CST are providing additional effort to orient newly joined officer on REOPA. Side by side they are also providing additional time to UPs where there is no Secretary, to maintain project documents properly. Orientation training of URCs had to be slightly rescheduled until all new UNOs had been posted.

Soil Shortage:

Most of the schemes undertaken in REOPA require soil for rehabilitation and maintenance work. During the rainy season there was shortage of soil in parts of the project area, which hindered project activities to some extent. In this situation PMCs engaged WCG members in different work where soil was available or in activities that do not require soil.

100 Days Employment Scheme:

The Government has launched 100 days employment scheme for poor people across the country, which created two types of problems for REOPA. Firstly, UPs were not always prepared for the 100 days employment scheme; they had no planned schemes for implementation under this programme. In this situation they implemented some schemes listed for public assets component of REOPA under 100 days employment programme. Secondly, this new safety net scheme has also created bottlenecks in UP management.

Responding to this situation, DOs of REOPA-CST advised UP Chairman, PMC and SIC to avoid duplicate scheme implementation, take time to identify new REOPA schemes and establish synergy among the small schemes so that local demand for development can be met. As a result, number of REOPA schemes listed has been reduced by around 7%.

Coordination with LGSP-LIC:

According to the Contribution Agreement REOPA-CST and LGSP-LIC should coordinate for capacity strengthening of Union Parishads and Upazila Parishads, particularly in training activities. Though REOPA-CST and LIC are operating in the same districts under the umbrella of UNDP, there is difference in project activities and project specific training.

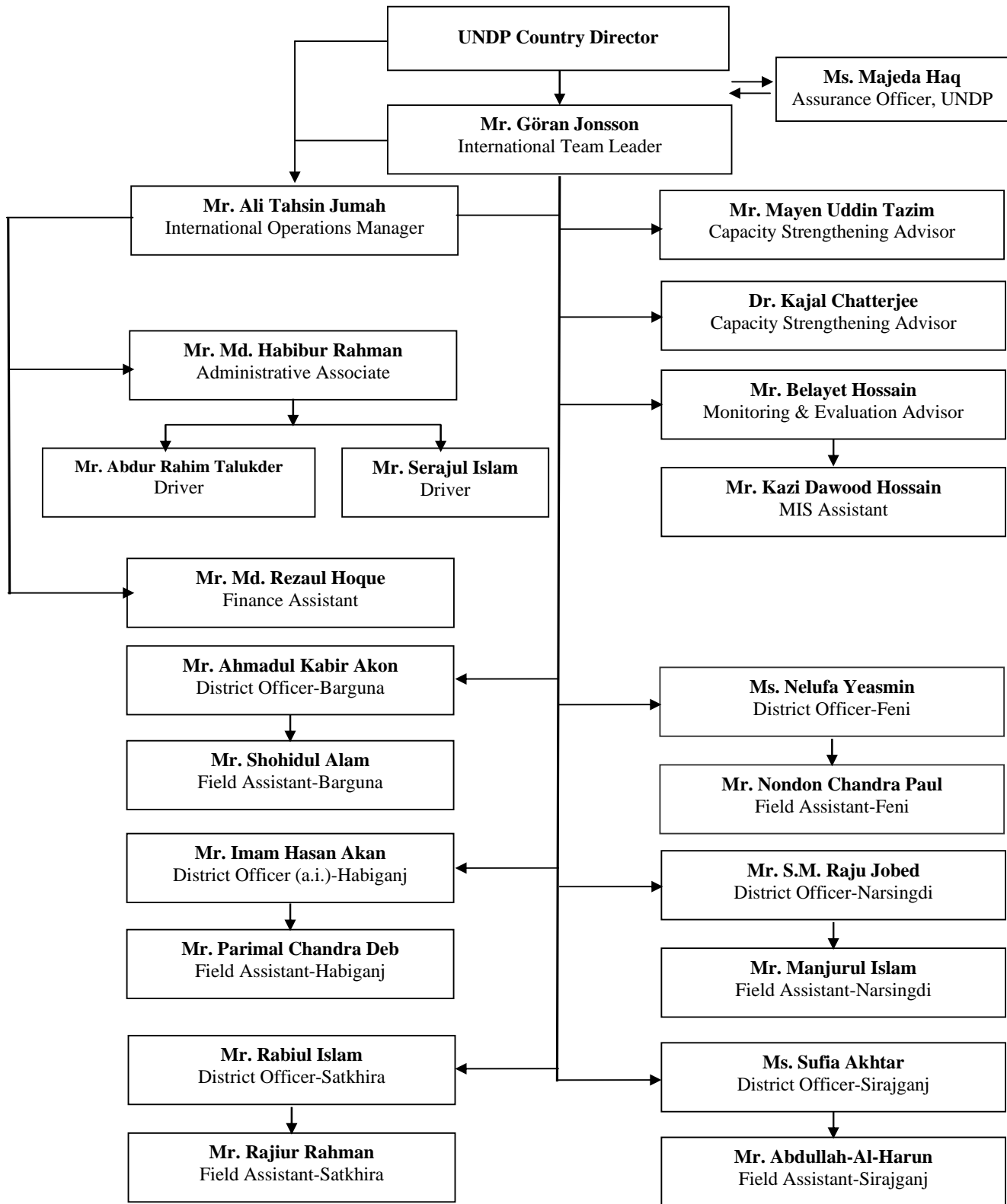
Several meetings were held between REOPA and LGSP-LIC to identify the areas of coordination in training activities. Finally, a meeting was organized at the office of DG, LGD on 13 August with the NPDs of REOPA and LGSP-LIC to finalize such avenues for coordination of training between the two projects and it was mutually decided that in each case the best positioned project would carry out tasks that are common for the two projects, without any duplication of training. A tentative plan for training in common has been developed, covering 2008-2010.

Baseline Survey:

EC's approval of the 2008 AWP was made subject to the submission of detailed methodology for the baseline survey as a condition for approving this budget allocation. Accordingly, REOPA-CST prepared detailed methodology, including sampling, parameters, and methods of data collection along with sample questionnaires for the survey and submitted to EC. Upon receiving the methodology, EC commented that the proposed methodology and budget is costly and asked for a revised methodology and reduced budget. REOPA-CST has submitted revised methodology and budget underpinning the rationale of the methodology and budget.

EC approved the methodology and budget of the baseline survey on 18 September 2008. The survey has been delayed by the time taken to present a detailed methodology, including a revision of the Logical Framework Matrix, and it will be implemented in the last quarter of 2008. A consulting firm has been contracted in October after a competitive bidding process.

Section V: Organisation and Management
Organisation structure and managements arrangements:



Staffing or Specialised Capacities:

As the technical support arm of the REOPA Project, the primary function of REOPA-CST members is to provide specialised technical advice and skill to the Project Task Force (PTF) and LGI officials. As such, the CST comprises one International Team Leader, one International Operations Manager and three Advisors in the fields of Capacity Strengthening and Monitoring & Evaluation. Their sole responsibility is to ensure the institutional strengthening and capacity building of the different institutions involved in the Project's implementation and also of officials and other representatives whose contribution is vital for enriching the impact of the Project. The supporting staff members of REOPA-CST include: Administrative Associate, Financial Assistant, and a Management Information System (MIS) Assistant.

At the District level, there are two representatives of REOPA-CST: one District Officer and one Field Assistant. Both of these officials undertake extensive field visits and interactions with the rural communities as well as the district administration officials. There is a close co-ordination between the Project Office and the six District Offices, supported by submission of monthly reports from the districts and the holding of co-ordination meetings with the field staff members.

Section VI: Budget and Delivery by Major Outputs:

Table 9: 1 July to 30 September 2008 Disbursement and Deliveries

<i>Outputs</i>	<i>Annual Budget (\$)</i>	<i>Annual Budget (€)</i>	<i>Delivery during July-Sept 08 (\$)</i>	<i>Delivery during July-Sept 08 (€)</i>
Activity 1: Institutional capacity development of LGIs on employment and pro-poor investment	77,881.62	50,000.00	5,066.00	3,252.37
Activity 2: Rural employment generation through pro-poor investment	5,881,353.04	3,775,828.65	-	-
Activity 3: Provision of technical assistance and support	606,406.51	389,312.98	145,942.00	93,694.76
7% Administrative Cost	459,594.88	295,059.91	10,570.56	6,786.30
Total	7,025,236.05	4,510,201.54	161,578.56	103,733.44

Table 10: 1 January to 30 September 2008 Disbursement and Deliveries

<i>Outputs</i>	<i>Annual Budget (\$)</i>	<i>Annual Budget (€)</i>	<i>Delivery during Jan-Sept 08 (\$)</i>	<i>Delivery during Jan-Sept 08 (€)</i>	<i>% of delivery as of date</i>
Activity 1: Institutional capacity development of LGIs on employment and pro-poor investment	77,881.62	50,000.00	37,196.25	23,879.99	48%
Activity 2: Rural employment generation through pro-poor investment	5,881,353.04	3,775,828.65	4079,020.71*	2,618,731.29*	69%
Activity 3: Provision of technical assistance and support	606,406.51	389,312.98	430,196.77	276,186.33	71%
7% Administrative Cost	459,594.88	295,059.91	318,248.96	204,315.83	69%
Total	7,025,236.05	4,510,201.54	4,864,662.69	3,123,113.45	69%

* This amount is the total actual deposited funds to 388 UPs for WCG wages and block grants, which were deposited during the second Quarter 2008.

EC has transferred an amount of Euro 3,581,841.19, 80% of the budget approved for 2008, on 18 May 2008, which was received in UNDP Bangladesh accounts only on 12.6.2008, as US\$ 5,579,191.89. Of €3,608,161.24 available, REOPA-CST has already utilized € 3,123,113.45 as direct expenditure and deposit of grants with UPs, with a balance of € 485,047.79. The project will run out of funds in November 2008, when another deposit of around € 430,000 for payment of WCG wages for the period 11 November to 31 December 2008 will have to be made and €70,000 initial advance for the selected PNGOs will have to be paid, with another €48,400 needed for the Service Delivery

Block Grants to be paid to the 88 UPs selected for 2008, as well as the fund needed for the operations of the CST. Therefore, in order to ensure smooth and uninterrupted delivery by REOPA-CST, it is essential that remaining EC funds for the year requested as the 3rd pre-financing payment are received in UNDP accounts at the earliest.

UNDP has requested transfer of the third prefinancing instalment in September 2008, supported by proper documentation.

Changed circumstances – specifically the reduced deployment period for REOPA partner NGOs and the need for additional visibility actions and capacity strengthening training of LGIs – have required a revision of the overall budget of the Contribution Agreement. A draft revised year-by-year OWP budget reflecting the changed circumstances has been prepared, along with justification for changes and a revised 2009 Annual Work Plan and Budget.

Section VII: Lessons learned

1. Wage rates paid in a safety net project must be on a par with minimum wages as reflected by current cost of living. As similar other schemes are paying more than REOPA, in the present context the amount of wages should be sufficient to meet the cost of soaring food prices. Initiatives have been taken to increase the wage rate of REOPA.
2. Beneficiary targeting is a major issue and all criteria for selection of beneficiaries have to be fully recognized at local level for correct targeting, to avoid leakage to non-target groups.
3. Ownership of a project by the implementing agency is crucial, and technical assistance has to be applied with this overriding principle in mind.
4. Active involvement of all project stakeholders, as envisaged in project documents, is crucial for successful project implementation. One case in point is the absence of PNGOs so far, due to their delayed deployment. PNGOs play an important role in various aspects of monitoring at Union and Upazila level – related to WCG work performance and remuneration, bank transactions, PMC/SIC/URC functioning, etc. – and the need for such monitoring has been substantiated by occasional performance deficiencies.