



NEWS

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Rural Employment Opportunities for Public Assets (REOPA)

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Visit of Country Director to REOPA



The Country Director (CD), UNDP spent some time on the evening of

18 December 2007 at the REOPA-CST Project Office. This was a good opportunity to share the different initiatives being undertaken by the CST members with the CD and requested for his advice on some of the crucial issues pertaining to the Project. He was updated with the latest achievements of the Project and seemed to be satisfied with the progress achieved so far. The visit motivated the CST members to function with a higher level of commitment.

Repair of Roads Damaged by Sidr in Barguna

The recent cyclone 'Sidr' of November 2007 has devastated the roads and other infrastructure of Barguna district, thereby causing immense suffering to the affected communities and dislocating the normal economic activities of the district. A survey was conducted to assess the damage caused by 'Sidr' in Amatali, Patharghata and Sadar Upazila by REOPA CST staff members in conjunction with representatives of LGED-DANIDA's Rural Roads Market Access and Infrastructure Development Project. Proposals to repair and rebuild important link roads jointly in the Upazilas of Amatali, Barguna Sadar and Pathargatha, connecting rural producers to markets are being processed as part of the Public Asset Creation and Rehabilitation Component of REOPA Project. The roads would also promote local tourism and general transportation will be greatly improved under this initiative.

LFA Finalization Workshop of REOPA

The LFA of REOPA given in the Project documents are in preliminary form and it was necessary to expand them and make them more comprehensive as an effective project management tool. This has been also provided in the Project Document during the inception phase of the Project.

In this connection, a one-day workshop on 'LFA Finalization' was held on 12 December 2007 with the participation of Project's key stakeholders i.e. EC, UNDP, GoB and REOPA-CST Team. The objective was to obtain suggestions/recommendations for fine-tuning the LFA of REOPA Project. A total of 17 participants participated in the workshop.



While the overall result framework of REOPA Project was supported by the participants, however, there were some issues that needed to be clarified and incorporated into the result framework of the Project. As the overall objective of the Project specifically mentions the issue of mainstreaming women into development programmes, the issue of women empowerment demands to be more elaborate in the purpose and result statements of the Project. The questions of sustainability of the livelihoods of the poor as well as the efforts made by REOPA have not been adequately addressed in the Project design as was discussed by the participants. The needs for safe drinking water and health service facility which are pivotal to achieve the overall objectives of the Project have not been covered by the result statement of the Project. It is expected that based on the recommendations of the workshop, the LFA will be finalized shortly and adopted as a key indicator for the Project's success.

Activities of REOPA-PTF

The Project Task Force (PTF) of REOPA has started some of the key activities of the Project during the month of December 2007. The PTF has completed Upazila Committee and Project Management Committee formation in all the 41 Upazilas and 388 Unions under REOPA operation area.

For the procurement of tools e.g. Dao (Cutter), Spade, Tamper, Pitcher and Basket for road maintenance quotations were collected from the suppliers of the participating districts of REOPA. The Project Director Mr. Akmal Hussein presided over a meeting on 26 December 2007 with officials of PTF Local Support Staff as well as vendors from the six districts of REOPA to discuss the prices and quantities of items to be provided. A total of 14 vendors from six districts were present in the meeting. Mr. Mobarak Ali, Program Officer, REOPA-PTF was also present in the meeting.



The PTF have completed crew member selection for Road Maintenance Component. A total of 11640 women in 388 Union were selected for road maintenance. The Project Management Committee of respective Union Parishads conducted the selection process with the active support of District Officers from REOPA-CST. The members of REOPA Upazila Committee and PTF members also attended some of the selection process at Union level.

Technical Training to Weavers of Sirajganj and Barguna

To provide the technical assistance under the Basic Services Delivery Component of the REOPA Project for improving the technical skill of the rural communities, such as weavers of



Sirajganj district who have been affected by flood on August through September 2007, a Training Need Assessment (TNA) has been conducted by REOPA. Two master weavers from Nadia district, West Bengal visited 20 flood affected weavers' household of Sirajganj district to identify the areas of training. This will be followed up by a three month long training programme from January 2008 for both the weavers of Sirajganj district as well as Rakhaine community (indigenous) of Barguna district who are primarily women weavers. The District Team of Barguna has conducted a survey on the Rakhaine weavers of Barguna and shared their survey findings with weavers and leaders of Rakhaine community as well as the visiting team from India.

Meeting of LGSP-LIC, UNDP

The Team Leader attended a meeting organized by Ms. Durafsan Chowdhury, Senior Programme Manager, UNDP, focusing on the capacity strengthening of Local Government Institutions (LGI) especially Union Parishads (UP), on 18th December 2007 at UNDP, Dhaka. The meeting which was attended by representatives from other similar initiatives of the UNDP included an in-depth presentation by VSO, an international NGO which has been involved in organizing different categories of training programmes for improving institutional strengthening and capacity-building of UPs in the identified areas of the NGO's presence. Thereafter, there was an interesting discussion on the presentation and it was decided that there would be in the future closer interaction between the LGSP-LIC and REOPA Projects due to their close linkages in their respective interventions through quarterly meetings for sharing knowledge and experiences and deepening their impact.

In this respect, four topics (to be identified) would be discussed in the subsequent round-tables to be organized by the LGSP-LIC that would also involve local NGOs, the media and other stakeholders.

The objective of these events would also be to promote increased interaction between the staff members of the different institutions at the central and field levels.

Workshop on Micro and Small Entrepreneurship(MSE) Development for Rural Women and Youth

REOPA Project is working towards generating employment opportunity for the rural poor, especially those who are most vulnerable – women and youth. In an effort to develop a network system on MSE with focus on women and youth, a day long workshop on 'Micro and Small Entrepreneurship Development for Rural Women and Youth' was held at REOPA CST Project office on 8th December 2007. The workshop was very well represented by local and national organizations like Banchte Shekha, Bangladesh Federation of Women Entrepreneurship etc. and others who are working in Micro and Small Entrepreneurship Development program in the rural areas, particularly with disadvantaged women. In all, 21 representatives attended the workshop.

The objectives of the workshop to share lesson-learned from successful programs of MSE for Rural Women and Youth; to identify areas of strength, opportunities and constraints in MSE Development for rural Women and Youth and to develop and build a networking mechanism among the organizations/NGOs involved in this field of activity.



Mr. Akmal Hussain, Project Director of REOPA inaugurated the workshop as Chairperson. He briefed the background and objectives of the REOPA projects in his swelcome address. Practical Action-Bangladesh, a UK based NGO, and Society for Social Services, a national NGO, presented papers on the 'Lesson-learned- Micro-Entrepreneurship Development Program' for the poor section of rural areas. Besides, Ms. Anjela Gomes of Banchte Shekha and Khadija Afzal of Bangladesh Federation of Women Entrepreneurship spoke about the evolution of her organization with emphasis on the history of women's involvement in the economic activities especially micro entrepreneurship development program. REOPA-CST presented a key note address that outlined the importance of self-employment and entrepreneurship development as a primary route to economically empower disadvantaged women groups especially through the promotion of micro and small-scale enterprises. In this respect, after graduating from the Road Maintenance Component (RMC), the women crew members could find alternative sources of income for improving their socio-economic conditions that would prevent them from getting enmeshed into the vicious circle of poverty again. At the end it was decided that with the initiatives of REOPA-CST, a formal networking and linkage mechanism will be established among the NGOs working in the sphere of Micro-Entrepreneurship Development Program. This was the first time such an initiative was been launched by a UNDP project.

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