



NEWS Bulletin

Rural Employment Opportunities for Public Assets (REOPA)

October 2007

VOLUME 1. ISSUE 2

Hon'ble Advisor MoLGRD&C Meets with Indian Counterpart

The PTF of REOPA Project along with the CST organised a meeting between Mr. Mohammed Anwarul Iqbal B.P.M. (Bar.) P.P.M, Hon'ble Minister for Local Government, Rural Development & Co-operatives, Government of Bangladesh and his counterpart, Dr. R.P.Singh to lay the foundation of close co-operation between the two countries in the sphere of rural development with special emphasis on the development of REOPA Project through learning experiences from similar initiatives being implemented under the aegis of the Indian National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and Scheme. Contacts have been also established with the specialized training institutions in India to prepare capacity-building training programmes both for Project staff as well as officials of Local Government Institutions (LGI) and details are being worked out at present for implementation at an early date.

REOPA News Coverage in Local News Paper

The news of the Training Need Assessment (TNA) of REOPA-CST which was undertaken in different Upazilas and Union Parishads of the Project's participating districts was widely covered by local news papers of the respective districts. The news highlighted on 'Launching TNA of REOPA-CST Project' in Habigonj was published in the Daily Khowai, a local news paper of Habigonj on 30 September 2007. In Satkhira district the news published in the Daily Kafela on the heading of TNA on 03 October 2007. In Narsingdi district the news was published under the heading of 'TNA of REOPA-CST Project started' in the Weekly Ajker Chatona on 07 October 2007 and the same news was also covered by the Daily Narsingdi Bani & the Weekly Arshete Muk" on 08 October 2007.



Deputy Commissioner, Hobigonj visit the TNA session at Lamatashee Union of Bahubal UZ and expressed that it is a good opportunity for UP members and UZ officials for exchanging their views on the Training

development process at the rural level. This, in turn, can be traced to the limitations of LGIs experience due to their inadequate capacity to get involve effectively in designing and implementing demand-driven community-based programmes at the grass-roots level. Bridging this gap and enhancing the capacity of LGIs, the first requisite input is training in which LGI officials are able to develop the necessary skills to address the needs of the rural population, especially poor and rural women.

In the development arena of Bangladesh, over the past few decades, there has been a shift of emphasis on rural development for poverty alleviation and equitable development in order to minimize the gap between rural and urban areas and to arrest rural-urban migration. While, there have been some progress achieved in this area, there still remains a long road ahead. The primary reason for the slow progress in the rural areas is due to lack of participation of the Local Government Institutions (LGIs) in the



Discussion meeting with the UNO, Chairman and other Upazila Officials for TNA at Tala Upazial, Satkhira.

on increasing the capacity of Government institutions, at the national and local levels, has launched a pilot initiative to undertake Training Needs Assessment (TNA) of LGI officials who will ultimately be responsible for managing the rural development initiatives through this Project. The main objectives of the TNA undertaken by the Capacity Strengthening Team (CST) of REOPA of the LGIs are:

- Assessment of the development of Local Government system from a historical perspective;
- Current status of Local Government;
- Identification of the specific training needs of LGIs;
- Assessment of the lack of a proactive approach on the part of LGIs to undertake schemes / programmes for rural development;
- Identification of specific training needs of different categories of officials in the LGIs with the aim of improving their performance.

The TNA survey which is being conducted in 12 Upazila Parishads and 36 Union Parishads of the six participating districts of REOPA Project will be completed by 31 October 2007. Thereafter, a comprehensive report will be prepared based on the key findings.

District Intervention of REOPA

It has been over a month since the District Officers of the REOPA-CST Project have been deployed at District level. The District Officers are regularly meeting with Deputy Commissioners, Upazila Nabahi



District Officer shared knowledge with Dying & Printing Textile Mills' employees in Sirajgonj

Officer, Union Parishad Chairmen and other concerned Officials to update REOPA-CST project activities and building close working relationship. They are also liaison with different development organizations and government and non-government service providing agencies in order to identify the potential areas for future intervention in line with the REOPA Project design. Particularly, the District Officers of REOPA-CST have started to build the relationship with Agriculture Extension Department, Livestock Department, Fisheries Department, LGED and Women Organizations for future collaboration. Besides, Sirajgonj and Feni districts have also met with local entrepreneurs and industries to examine the possible areas of collaboration for employment generation for the rural poor.

All District Officers are gathering information from their respective districts for preparing an Intelligence Map of respective district which would be beneficial for them during the implementation of REOPA Project. The Capacity Strengthening Team is conducting Training Need Assessment (TNA) of LGIs Officials of the six participating districts of the REOPA-CST Project in close cooperation and coordination with District Officers. According to the sample Union Parishads and Upazila Parishad, the District Teams are collecting information from respective Union and Upazila Parishad Officials.

Networking and Partnership Development with Different Organization

In an effort to establish synergies with the initiatives of other UN specialised agencies meetings were organized with officials dealing in similar community-empowerment programmes of UNICEF - Dr. Uhuaa, Chief, Health and Nutrition Section, UNICEF, Ms. M. Mitra, Programme Officer dealing with Community-based Programmes, UNICEF, Mr. A. Engdahl, Senior Advisor, Rural Roads & Market Access Infrastructure Development Project (RRMAIDP), DANIDA, Dr. A.M.R. Choudhury, Deputy Executive Director, BRAC, Mr. A. Alam, Deputy Executive Director, BRAC, Mr. A.K.Rashid Uddin Ahmed, National Project Director, Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS), Department of Agricultural Extension, Ministry of Agriculture and Dr. Muhammad Nurul Alam, Zonal Co-ordinator, SPFS Programme, FAO. During these discussions, the scope of identifying 'entry points' for joint initiatives were discussed which will be followed up by specific allied inputs in the coming months.

Apart from the above, the Capacity Strengthening Advisors met Mr. Prosantha K. Roy Director, Programme & Evaluation, NILG, Dhaka and Mr. SK. Md. Mohsin, Project Director, Sunamgonj Community Based Resource Management Project (SCBRMP) LGED, Dhaka. The objective of the meetings were to share the training needs of LGIs (Upazila/Union), empowerment of Community Based Organization and Small Economic Enterprise Development program for rural poor.

“This document has been produced with the financial assistance of European Union. The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union”

Current Development Policy Issues

Seminar on 'The role of Union Parishad in providing service: People's expectation and present situation'

The speakers at the seminar stressed on the need for increasing skill of UP Chairman and members because people's expectation from them is increasing everyday. They focused on the fact that the budget of the UP should be allocated from parliament and measures should be taken to make the UP free from bureaucratic control and the UP should be depoliticized so that honest and active people can be elected as UP chairman and members. Besides, the skill of the UP representatives should have to be increased. The speakers also suggested that the accountability of the UP chairman and members is very important so that people can repose confidence in them. At the same time, the facilities of the UP representatives should be increased and empowerment of the UP is urgently needed to ensure development at the grassroots level.

The seminar was organized by Democracy Watch at the CIRDAP Auditorium in Dhaka on 09 August 2007. The seminar was attended by Mr. Mahbubul Alam, former adviser to caretaker government and editor of the Daily Independent, Dr. Taibur Rahman, Chairman of Development Studies of Dhaka University, Mr. Taleya Rehman, Executive Director of Democracy Watch, Prominent journalist Mr. Ataus Samad, Dr. Salahuddin Aminuzzaman, Dr. Amirul Islam Chowdhury, Prof. M Mohabbat, Mr. Tahrunnesa Abdullah and Dr. Tofail Ahmed.