

Implementation of Development Projects of Union Parishad in Bangladesh: Constraints and Prospects

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ABSTRACT

Projects are frequently acknowledged as effective development tools. Governmental organizations and Local Government Institutions in Bangladesh carry out public development initiatives (LGIs). Resources produced locally are in little supply, hence the central government serves as the primary source of funding for local governments as they carry out development programs at the Union level. The primary goal of government spending is to satisfy the general populace. The government heavily funds rural development through LGIs. Local powerful stakeholders attempt to influence UP politically, socially, and economically out of self-interest. One of Bangladesh's main development priorities is the development of rural infrastructure. The study's goals are to look into the degree of local residents' satisfaction with the projects and the distribution of monies used to carry out UP projects. A mixed strategy was used. Using primary and secondary data, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used. The result implies that project management effectiveness (in terms of time, money, and scope) does not guarantee project success (in terms of the satisfaction of the local population). It is dependent on additional factors. They consist of the service value the project adds and user involvement in the project's execution.

Keyword: Development Projects, Union Parishad, Implementation

1. INTRODUCTION

Projects are widely accepted as a useful tool for development. Projects are carried out with certain objectives in mind. As a result, programs can achieve certain objectives. Similarly, projects can aid in the development of Bangladesh's socioeconomic surroundings, such as rural infrastructure, health, education, and women empowerment. [1] A huge number of infrastructure development projects are being implemented, particularly in rural areas. The lack of suitable infrastructure is a major impediment to the growth of the rural economy. Infrastructure that is of high quality is a valuable asset. In addition, it helps to build various socioeconomic situations. In the literature, a project is characterized in a variety of ways. Two of them are listed below: A project is made up of a group of people who are working together to achieve a specific goal. [1]

Public sector initiatives in Bangladesh are implemented by agencies and Local Government Institutions (LGIs). The implementation of projects by the lowest tier of local government, the Union Parishad, was examined in this study. Union Parishad is an LGI headquartered in villages. [3] According to Aminuzzaman (2013), each Union Parishad, which has an average population of 28,000 people, is around 33.3 square kilometers in size. In Bangladesh, there are 4,562 UPs, each of which is divided into nine wards, each of which contains 15 to 18 villages. The current Union Parishad structure was established in 1885 by British Colony Rulers and has been changed several times over the previous century by various rulers. [5]

Background of the Study

In Bangladesh, rules permit all LGIs to collect revenue from local resources in a variety of methods. There is no precise data on revenue collecting. As a result, locally generated resources are scarce, and the main source of financing for local governments to execute development initiatives at the Union level comes from the central government. Different sources of funding are available to the Union Parishad body, including Test Relief (TR-Rural Infrastructure Development and Maintenance Program), Food for Work (FFW), block grants, and the Annual Development Program (ADP). These funds are used for infrastructure development, such as the rehabilitation and development of graveyards, ponds, roads, educational institutions, religious institutions, clubs, and sports grounds; and the establishment of solar plants in social, educational, and religious institutions. [4]

The primary goal of government spending is to increase broad public satisfaction. For rural development, the government spends a lot of money through LGIs. The money is used to support the government's many goals. TR, FFW, block grants, and ADP, in particular, aim to improve infrastructural conditions as well as create jobs in rural areas, increase rural people's income, strike a balance in food supply throughout the country and ensure food security, have a positive impact on poverty reduction, meet power demand using solar energy and power, and improve overall life standards. However, at the grassroots level, it is discovered that general public contentment is low. [4] [5]

Problem Statement

Satisfaction of the general people is the key objective of the government expenditure. Government spends huge money through LGIs for the rural development. The funds are allocated for serving different objectives of the government. [6] Particularly, TR, FFW, block grants and ADP aim at improving infrastructural conditions as well as creating employment in the rural areas, increasing income of the rural people, striking a balance in food supply everywhere in the country and ensuring food security, making a positive impact on poverty reduction, meeting the power demand by using solar energy and power and improving life standard as a whole. However, in the context of Bangladesh, impact of political influence on the satisfaction of the local people of the local government project has not been significantly studied. But studies on administrative culture, norms and practices show that political interference evolving from the sociopolitical context has taken a deep root in the society. LGIs face an informal political influence from people actively involved in politics in Bangladesh. [7] For the sake of own interest, local dominant stakeholders try to exert their political, social and economic influence over UP. Rural infrastructure development is one the thrust sectors of development in Bangladesh. The government makes huge expenditure each year through allocating funds in different channels, like ADP, block grants, EGPP, TR, and FFW, etc. The objectives of the study are to investigate the satisfaction level of the local people about the projects and to investigate how funds for implementing projects by UP are allocated.

2. METHODOLOGY

A mixed approach was followed. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were followed using primary and secondary data. Quantitative data on the perception of the local people was used to find out the aspect of challenges of the project in the contexts of time management, cost management, scope management and patron-client relationship. Then qualitative data analysis method was used to discover the challenges from those aspects. The independent variables are: time management, cost management, scope management and patron-client relationship. The dependent variable of the study is project success which was indicated by local people's satisfaction. A questionnaire survey was conducted among 100 users of a union. Perceptions of the local people on time, cost and scope, patron-cent relationship and their satisfaction in the project was collected during the questionnaire survey. Besides, the questionnaire survey collect quantitative data regarding perceptions of the local people on the indicators. Qualitative data on them will be collected from open-ended interviews KIIs like representatives of UP, officials at concerned ministries. For secondary data books, research articles, project documents, etc. were studied. SPSS was used for data analysis. I took two projects for assessing the implementation. These are given below:

Project A:

Improvement of Lakpur Mollik House Mosque – Chikni Sluice gate road from ch.00-500m under tarail upazila Dist. Kishoreganj.

Project B:

Improvement of Akobpur bazar - Aowzia road via Akobpur Madrasha road from ch. 00-500m under tarail upazila Dist. Kishoreganj.

3. RESULT AND FINDINGS

Findings of the field study are discussed below. The field study is conducted in Taljanga union of Tarail upazila in Kishoreganj district.

Time management

Each project maintains a timeframe within which the project must be implemented. Projects implemented by UPs are small in cost size. They require less time for implementation.

Table 1 shows the perception of the respondents regarding implementation of the projects within the specified time framework. For easy understanding of the findings the categories 'completely successful' and 'less successful' is merged together 'successful' and 'less unsuccessful' and 'neither successful nor unsuccessful' together as 'unsuccessful'. Now it shows that for 'Project A' 56 percent respondents consider UP is 'successful' and 44 percent respondents consider UP is 'unsuccessful' in implementing it time. For 'Project B' 59 percent considers UP is 'successful' and 41 percent respondents consider UP is 'unsuccessful' in implementing it in time.

Table-1 Perception of the local people on timely finishing of the projects

In implementing the project in the specified timeframe how much is the UP successful?	Project A (in percent)	Project B (in percent)
Completely unsuccessful	0	0
Less unsuccessful	18	19
Neither successful nor unsuccessful	26	22
Less successful	25	29
Completely successful	31	30
Total	100	100

N= 100 percent, Source: Field data, 2021

So, it can be inferred that 'implementation of the works within the specified timeframe' has significant relationship with the 'local people's satisfaction'. However, 56 percent respondents observed that 'Project A' was implemented in time and 59 percent observed that 'Project B' was implemented in time.

Cost management

Cost management is one of the knowledge areas of project management. UP gets cost from central government through different allocations from different authorities: TR, FFW, EGPP from MoDM&R under social safety net programs, ADP from LGD and LGSP (currently, its second phase in running) from LGD. Besides, UP gets a small share (1 percent) of the locally collected revenue from UzP.

UP is responsible for the resource's management of any project. Table 2 show perception of the respondents regarding UP's capability in this regard. For simplification of the finding's categories 'less incapable' and 'very less capable' are merged into 'incapable' and 'less capable' and 'completely capable' are done into 'capable'. Then Table 2 shows that 62 percent respondents perceived that Tarail UP is completely capable in managing the resources. It can be inferred that UP is significantly capable in managing the resources of the projects.

Table-2: Perception on capabilities of UP in managing resources for the projects

How much UP is capable in managing the resources for the projects?	Both projects (in percent)
Completely incapable	7
Less incapable	13
Very Less incapable	18
Less capable	33
Completely capable	29
Total	100

N= 100 percent, Source: Field data, 2021

Capability Assessment

There is individual PIC/WC for implementing each project. PIC/WC works under the supervision and monitoring of UP. So, capability of PIC/WC affect the capability of UP. In that way, indicator-1 depends on the indicator-2 of cost management. Table 3 shows the perception of the respondents regarding PIC's/WC's capability in implementing the projects utilizing the resources. From the Table 3 categories 'less incapable' and 'very less capable' can be merged into 'slightly capable'; and 'less capable' and 'completely capable' into 'significantly capable'. Now the Table 3 shows that 51 percent respondents observe PIC of 'Project A' is 'significantly capable'. For 'Project B' 46 percent respondents observe WC of 'Project B' is 'significantly capable'.

Table-3: Perception on local people on capabilities of PIC/WC in implementing projects using the resources

How much PIC/WC is capable in implementing the projects using the resources?	Project A (in percent)	Project B (in percent)
Completely incapable	10	11
Less incapable	18	19
Very Less incapable	21	22
Less capable	28	26
Completely capable	23	22
Total	100	100

N= 100 percent, Source: Field data, 2021

Transparency Assessment:

Transparency refers to proper utilization of the funds. Table 4 represents the perception of the users regarding transparency in the projects. For easy understanding of Table 4 the categories 'low transparency' and 'mid-level transparency' can be lumped together as 'low transparency' and 'quite high transparency' and 'complete transparency' can be merged into 'high transparency'. Now the Table 4 shows that 48 percent observe 'low transparency' in 'Project A'. For 'Project B' 49 percent respondents observe low transparency'.

Table-4: Perception on local people on transparency in projects

How much transparency was maintained in the projects?	Project A (in percent)	Project B (in percent)
No transparency	19	18
Low transparency	29	31
Mid level transparency	25	28
Quite high transparency	14	14
Complete transparency	13	9
Total	100	100

N= 100 percent, Source: Field data, 2021

So, it is evident that the respondents perceive 'Project B' more transparent than 'Project A'. But it seems that lack of transparency prevails in both projects.

Implementation

Table 5 shows the perception of the respondents regarding full implementation of the project works. For making it simple, 'less agree' and 'mid-level agree' can be merged together as 'weakly agree' and 'quite highly agree' and 'completely agree' as 'strongly agree'. Now the Table 5 shows that for 'Project A' 62 percent respondents 'strongly agree' that the works under the project are completely implemented and 22 percent of the respondents 'weakly agree' on it. For 'Project B' 63 percent respondents 'strongly agree' that the works under the project are completely implemented 19 percent respondents 'weakly agree' on it. So in terms of complete implementation of the project works, more percentage of respondents observe that 'Project B' is better done than 'Project A'.

Table-5: Perception on local people on transparency in projects

How much do you agree that the works under the project is fully implemented?	Project A (in percent)	Project B (in percent)
Not agree	8	7
Less agree	14	12
Mid level agrees	16	18
Quite Highly agree	34	36
Completely agree	28	27
Total	100	100

N= 100 percent, Source: Field data, 2021

Quality of the implemented works

Table 6 presents the perception of the respondents regarding quality of the implemented works. For easy understanding of the Table 6 'less dissatisfied' and 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' are merged as 'low satisfaction'; and 'less satisfied' and 'completely satisfied' as 'high satisfaction'. Now Table 6 shows that 48 percent respondents have 'high satisfaction' about the quality of works done in 'Project A' and 28 percent respondents have 'low satisfaction' about it. For 'Project B' 46 percent respondents have 'high satisfaction' about the quality of works done and 32 percent respondents have 'low satisfaction' about it. So, more respondents are satisfied about the quality of the works in 'Project A' than 'Project B'. But it also seems that they may have some dissatisfaction regarding quality of both projects

Table-6: Perception on local people the quality of the project works

Are you satisfied with the quality of the projects' works?	Project A (in percent)	Project B (in percent)
Completely dissatisfied	12	13
Less dissatisfied	16	19
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	24	22
Less satisfied	34	36
Completely satisfied	14	10
Total	100	100

N= 100 percent, Source: Field data, 2021

Influence of the local influential and elite people on the projects:

Table 7 represents the status of influence of the local people in the implementation of the projects. For the sake of explanation of the scenario categories 'low influence', 'mid-level influence' and 'high influence' are merged into 'existence of influence'. Now the Table 7 shows that 52 percent respondents observe external influence of the local elites and powerful people in 'Project A' and 29 percent do not observe any influence on it. For 'Project B' 53 percent respondents observe influence of the local elites and powerful people and 28 do not observe so. So it can be inferred that external influence from the local influential and elite people almost equally worked for both projects.

Table 7- Respondent's perception of influence of the local influential and elite people in the projects.

To what extent did the local influential people influence in project implementation?	Project A (in percent)	Project B (in percent)
No influence	11	16
Low influence	18	12
Mid level influence	19	19
High influence	26	33
Complete influence	26	20
Total	100	100

N= 100 percent, Source: Field data, 2021

Overall satisfaction of the user:

Table 8 represents the overall satisfaction level of the users about the projects. For the sake of easy understanding the categories 'less satisfied' and 'completely satisfied' is clustered into 'satisfied' category. Table 8 shows that 55 percent respondents have 'high satisfaction' about the 'Project A' and 26 percent respondents have 'low satisfaction' about it. For 'Project B' 50 percent respondents have 'high satisfaction' about the project and 28 percent respondents have 'low satisfaction' about it. So, more respondents are satisfied about the 'Project A' than 'Project B'.

Table 8- Overall satisfaction of the local people about the projects

Overall, how much are you satisfied with the projects?	Project A (in percent)	Project B (in percent)
Completely dissatisfied	8	11
Less dissatisfied	18	17
Nether satisfied nor dissatisfied	19	22
Less satisfied	39	42
Completely satisfied	16	8
Total	100	100

N= 100 percent, Source: Field data, 2021

4. CONCLUSION

The dependent variable of the study is project success. Its indicator is local people's satisfaction. The independent variables are time management, cost management, scope management and patron-client relationship. The indicator of time management is implementation of the works within the specified timeframe. The indicators of cost management are UP's capability in managing project resources, PIC's/WC's capability to implementation projects utilizing the resources and transparency. The indicators of scope management are quality of the implemented works and complete implementation of the projects. The indicator of patron-client relationship is influence of the local influential and elite people on the projects.

The perceptions of the users signify that 'Project B' (construction of footbridge funded by LGSP) is in better position than 'Project A' (construction of earthen road funded by FFW and EGPP) in all indicators of independent variables. But, surprisingly, overall satisfaction level of the users is higher in 'Project A' than 'Project B'.

This finding suggests that efficiency in project management (in terms of time, cost and scope) does not ensure project success (in terms of local people's satisfaction). It depends on some more variables. They include service value added by the project and participation of the users in the implementation of the project.

Ethical issues

Not applicable.

Informed consent

Not applicable.

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Conflicts of interests

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interests.

Data and materials availability

All data associated with this study are present in the paper.

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