

An Examination of Innovations in Union Parishads: A Study of Local Government Support Project

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Abstract: *The local government in Bangladesh as an institution though old is not strong enough specially in the rural areas. Administrative controls, lack of participation of the people in the decision making process, lack of human resources, training and experience, absence of transparency & accountability mechanisms, undue interference of local elites, mastans and politicians are few of the problems which are responsible for weak and ineffective local government institutions. From the year 2006, the Ministry of Local Government of Bangladesh took an initiative for strengthening local government at the union level i.e. Union Parishads (UPs) by introducing Local Government Support Project (LGSP). The broad objective of the LGSP¹ is strengthening Union Parishad through different mechanism like transferring block grants directly to the UPs to overcome process barriers, facilitating peoples' involvement in the development planning process as well as project implementation process through mechanisms like open budget meeting, revealing of progress reports to the people about ongoing projects, auditing of UPs activities, frequent inspection of project area by district facilitator, DDLG and UNO etc. As achieving objective of LGSP program is very important for strengthening Union Parishads, this study has tried to evaluate how far the LGSP program has achieved its immediate objectives and how far it has succeeded in adding values to its beneficiaries.*

From the study it appears that LGSP has succeeded moderately in achieving its objectives. However, the fact remains that about 50 percent of the respondents have no knowledge about LGSP and raises a validity question about its operational process and achievement even after three years of operations. From the overall data analysis and observations it can be concluded that the LGSP has initiated a positive start towards strengthening Union Parishad in terms of accountability, transparency and popular participation and need further consolidation and improvement.

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¹ LGSP was initiated by the Government of Bangladesh in the year 2006 for strengthening UPs, drawing on the lessons learned from the Sirajgonj local governance development fund project. Local government division of MLGRD&C is the executing agency of this project is being supported by the World Bank (through an IDA credit) and UNDP/UNCDF, DANIDA and EC (through grant). The proposed duration of this project was July 2006 to 30 June 2011.

Introduction:

The local government is an organized social entity with a sense of oneness. By definition, local government means an intra-sovereign governmental unit within the sovereign state dealing mainly with local affairs, administered by local authorities and subordinate to the state government (Jahan, 1997). Strong local government institutions are important for enhancing good governance. Governance has been defined as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development (World Bank 1994). Local government is acknowledged as a highly viable mechanism through which democratic processes and practices can be established and participatory development ensured (Khan, 2000).

About 75% of the country's population lives in the rural areas and the service delivery to the rural community is quite inadequate & inefficient. After being elected, the representatives of UPs felt (mostly) accountable to the Upazila or district bureaucratic bosses rather to the community while they never practice any transparent system like open budget meetings, information sharing with community, and public hearing for UPs income expenditure or even rarely consult with community regarding planning, or implementation of development projects. Under such a circumstances ministry of local government took initiative for strengthening UPs by introducing Local Government Support Project (LGSP). The main purpose of this program was to ascertain more participation of local people in the development activities, increasing efficiency of union parishad, addressing poverty by institutionalizing and capacity building for fiscal transfers, enhancing local revenue mobilization and improving accountability and monitoring.

Problem Statement:

An overview of the growth and evolution of local government units in Bangladesh establishes the fact that these have all along been under the strict administrative control of the public bureaucracy and the close political control of the national government/ party in power. They never enjoyed the freedom to choose development projects and work without the direction and control of the bureaucracy. As a result, the local bodies could neither become politically/financially viable nor could they gain any credibility in the eyes of the electorate. Consequently, local government units have always been institutionally and financially weak,

poorly managed and lacked social and political credibility (Aminuzzaman 2001).

Under such a condition Ministry of local government with the help of World Bank and UNDP/UNCDF/DANIDA/EC took the LGSP program to overcome the existing problems and barrier of UPs. The most important constraints of UPs are lack of transparency, accountability, low capacity, bureaucratic control, political interference, limited authority, weak financial resources etc (Aminuzzaman 2005). The proposed project implementation period is July 2006 to 30 June 2011. The broad objective of the project is to strengthen Union Parishad through different mechanism. The most important mechanism of this project is transferring grants directly to the UPs to overcome process barrier. The other mechanisms are peoples' involvement in the development planning process as well as project implementation process, open budget meeting, revealing of progress report to the people about the ongoing projects, auditing of UPs activities, frequent inspection of project areas by district facilitator, DDLG and UNO, training of elected representatives of UPs, production of planning and budgeting report to the people through notice board of UPs.

In the meantime, LGSP program has elapsed three financial years. Achieving objective of LGSP program is very important for strengthening Union Parishads. The present study has tried to evaluate how far the program has achieved its objectives and how far the program has succeeded in adding values to its beneficiaries.

Research Question:

- To what extent has LGSP been effective in fulfilling the objectives manifested in its components?
- Has LGSP succeeded in adding values/benefits being perceived by the intended beneficiaries?

Rationale and scope of the study:

Drawing lessons from the pilot projects², the Government of Bangladesh plans to move forward in replicating and institutionalizing these lessons

² Such as the Sirajgonj Local Government Support Project (UNCDF/UNDP), the Tangail Participatory Rural Development Project (JICA) and the Social Investment Project and Municipal Services Project (WB) for testing some of the initiatives on fiscal devolution and local government reforms.

throughout the country with the help of development partners to support a strategy for strengthening the local governance through increasing the size of block grant to UPs, this initiative is known as LGSP. The government of Bangladesh is implementing this project through local government division and its duration is July 2006 to 30 June 2011. By this time, the project has passed three years of its five year plan. So now it is very relevant and also important to examine the project performance/activities for evaluating how far it has achieved its objective i.e. to make a qualitative/quantitative analysis whether the project is running on the right track or not. Through the field level survey, the present study has tried also to find out how far LGSP has succeeded in adding values to the beneficiaries for establishing a sound monitoring, involvement of community in ensuring participation and accountability to strengthen local governance and fiscal devolution as well as creating capacity both at the management and community level to implement and sustain the system.

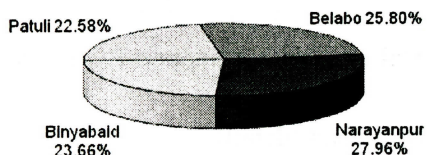
Methodology:

The present study has tried to achieve its objective reviewing different existing literature and information related to LGSP and through field level survey. Both primary and secondary data have been collected, processed, categorized and analyzed keeping in mind the objectives of the study. In order to collect the primary data five sets of structured questionnaires have been used for the present study. The collected data has been processed and analyzed with the use of MS Excel and other available methods of data analysis. In some cases, flow charts and tabular presentation have also been used to present the findings of the data in a graphic manner.

Population and sampling:

In the present study, survey was concentrated at Belabo, Narayanpur, Binyabaid, and Patuli union of Belabo upazila, Narsingdi district. The main respondents of the survey were the community people. Among the collected sample in the study area, 25.80% was collected from Belabo union, 27.96% from Narayanpur union, 23.66% from Binyabaid union and 22.58% from Patuli union (Figure 1).

Fig-2: General respondents from different unions
(n=93)



Source: Survey data

Study design

Research method is the functional action strategy carried out by the researcher in the light of the theoretical framework and guiding research questions and or the proposed hypothesis (Aminuzzaman 1991:32). In the present study to get the answer of the research questions both open-ended and closed questionnaire have been used for qualitative and quantitative data. Within the closed questionnaire contingency questions were also included. Besides this, observation and interviews method and case study method were also used to collect the primary data.

Primary data source

In this study both primary and secondary sources were utilized. The primary data was collected with the help of five sets of questionnaire for different groups of respondent who are either directly or indirectly related with the LGSP program. Though there were set questionnaire for collecting data from the respondents, there were also informal interviews with the district facilitator, trainers related with the LGSP program (e.g Cooperative officer), secretary of the union parishads, school teachers etc.

Secondary data source

Theoretical framework of the present study has made by consulting the published and unpublished documents that are related to the LGSP program. Union parishad operational manual 2007 and 2009 (revised), LGSP development project proposal (DPP)-2006 and 2009 (Revised but yet to approved), different register maintaining LGSP activities in the union parishad were consulted to understand the flow of block grant and its implementation process. A number of articles published in the international journal were also studied and analyzed to understand the concept of peoples' participation, ensuring accountability, capacity building of Union Parishad etc.

Overview of Local Governance Support Project:

The Local Governance Support Project is implemented with a view to strengthen the role of UPs throughout the country by the government of Bangladesh with the help of development partners.

The revised cost of the Local Governance Support Project is shown in the table-1 below:

Table1: Revised cost of the project (detail)

(In Lakh Taka)

Financial Year	Project Version	Estimated cost				Total
		GOB (FE)	Project Aid (PA)		DPA	
			RPA			
			Through GOB	Special Account		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Year-1 (2006-07)	1st Revised	-	-	14.61		14.61
	Original	200.00	-	2717.60	1346.61	4264.21
Year-2 (2007-08)	1st Revised	4708.49		4892.34	636.46	10237.29
	Original	3595.00	-	6282.21	2463.30	12340.51
Year-3 (2008-09)	1st Revised	10700.00		13500.00	2600.00	26800.00
	Original	8142.00	-	11817.10	2307.42	22266.52
Year-4 (2009-10)	1st Revised	16000.00		22300.00	3700.00	42000.00
	Original	16767.00	-	21776.89	2337.46	40881.35
Year-5 (2010-11)	1st Revised	22687.5	-	36228.05	5594.90	64510.45
	Original	25392.00	-	34341.18	2661.14	62394.32
Total	1st Revised	54096.00		76935.00	12531.36	143562.36
	Original	54096.00	-	769335.00	11115.94	142146.91

Source: Development Project Plan 2009 Prepared by Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives.

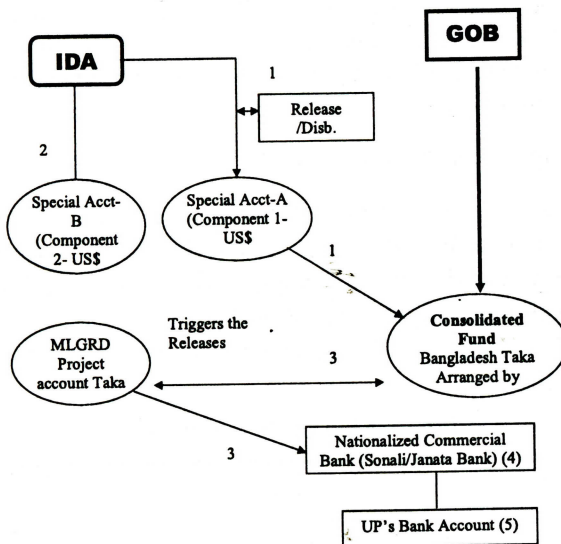
The Local Governance Support Project (LGSP) has five major components to deliver the outputs set out in the log frame of development project proposal (DPP). These components are being supported through the World Bank, IDA loan and UNDP grant. These are described below:

Component-1: Fiscal Transfer

This component lies at the centre of the project. The objective of this component is to support two forms of fiscal transfers: a largely unconditional block grant and a performance grant. These grants are the foundations upon which other components of the program are built.

Fund flow mechanism

The fund flow mechanism of LGSP program from government to the UPs is shown in the flow chart given below:



Component-2: Institutionalizing Accountability

The program seeks to institutionalize accountability into existing system based on a set of incentives associated with the expanded block grant and complemented by mandatory disclosure by UPs to both communities and to higher tiers of Government. Regular open meetings, public disclosure and regular reporting are the methods by which the participatory process will be ensured for releasing the expanded block grant.

Component-3: LGSP -Supporting Core Local Government Capacity Development

This component will provide information and support to the various actors involved in block grant implementation in particular, and local public Expenditure Management (PEM) in general and will assist GoB in developing a capacity building framework.

Component-4: Performance Review and Policy Development

The goal of this component is to improve GOB's ability to make use of data in its policy analysis and formulation.

Component-5: Learning And Innovation Component (LIC)

This learning and Innovation Component (LIC) of LGSP will be supported with grant funding by UNDP/UNCDF/DANIDA/EC. LIC will operate at two levels:

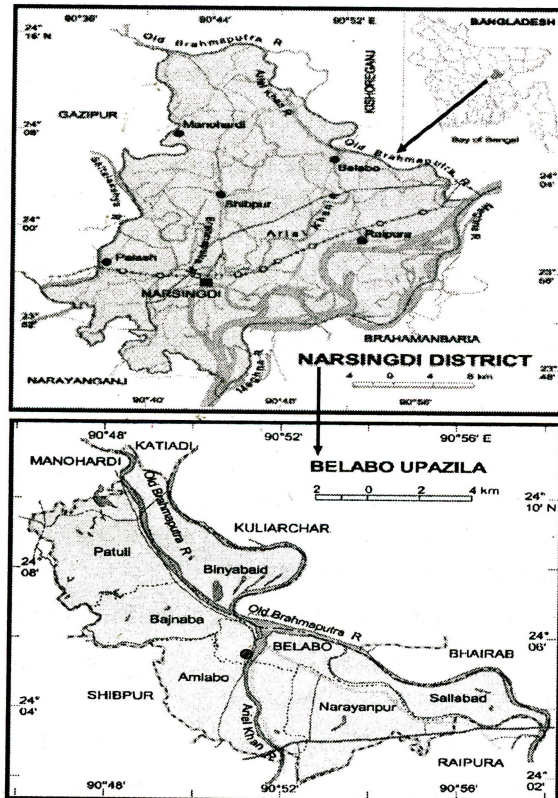
- (i) Within 6 LIC districts it will supplement support to UPs from other LGSP components by building upon the lessons learned from the earlier Pilot projects.

- (ii) At the national level it will support LGD's capacity to detail policy lessons from LIC districts to promote overall policy development on local government to feed this learning into other LGSP components and to ensure overall coordination.

General description of the study area

Narsingdi is a district in central Bangladesh. It is part of the Dhaka division with an area of 1140.76 sq km. The district consists of 6 Upozilas and 69 Union parishad (Source: Bangla Pedia). The upozilas are Belabo, Monohordi, Shibpur, Raipura, palash and Narsingdi sadar. Four union of Belabo upazila was selected for this research work. Map of the study area has shown in figure 2.

Fig-1: Map of the study area



Belabo Upazila: Belabo Upazila with an area of 117.60 sq km consists of seven union parishads, 52 mouzas and 97 villages. Population 145708; male 51%, female 49%, average literacy 25.9%; male 25.9% and female 20.6%.

Initiation of LGSP at Narsingdi District:

LGSP program has covered 52 unions of all 6 upazila of Narsingdi district. Six unions of Belabo upazila has been covered by LGSP program. Among them, Belabo and Narayanpur union have passed three financial year of LGSP, the other two unions Binyabaid and Patuli have passed two financial years of LGSP program (table-2). So it was considered by the researcher that studied area has matured enough for evaluating the LGSP.

Table 2: Year wise coverage of LGSP program in the study area.

Union coverage of Belabo Upazila			
Union name of <i>Belabo Upazila</i>	Year of inclusion		
Belabo	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
Naraynpur	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
Binyabaid		2008-2009	2009-2010
Patuli		2008-2009	2009-2010
Beznabo			2009-2010
Sallabad			2009-2010
Amlabo	No coverage till now		

Implemented project in the study area under LGSP:

The development projects implemented in this locality under LGSP includes—construction of box-culvert, class room construction, irrigation drainage, road protection wall, road reconstruction, sanitary latrine distribution, tube well installation, tree plant distribution, elevating of low lying area in the school yard, and book distribution among the poor meritorious students in the high school.

Assessment and LGSP Interventions:

LGSP has covered all six Upazilas of Narsingdi District and it has been implemented at six unions of Belabo Upazila in Narsingdi District. Belabo and Narayanpur Union was included under LGSP from 2007-2008, Binyabaid and Patuli Union was included from 2008-2009. Other two union i.e Beznabo and Belabo Unions had been selected for inclusion in the LGSP from 2009-2010. The first four unions of Belabo upazila were made an in-depth study by the researcher.

Block Grant

Block Grant transfer or fiscal transfer is the main driving force to achieve objectives of LGSP. From analysis it is seen that in Belabo Union 58.33%, in Narayanpur Union 50%, Binyabaid Union 45.45% and in Patuli Union 42.85% respondents are informed about LGSP and the rest of the percentage of the respective union do not know about LGSP (table 4).

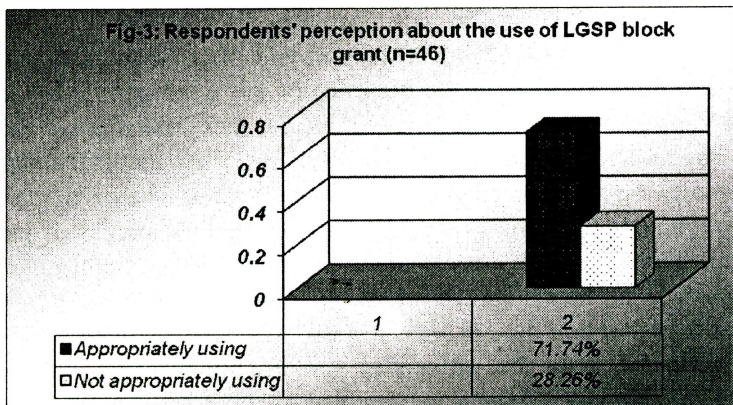
In all four unions, i.e. out of 93 respondents (general people) about 49.46% know about LGSP and 50.54% respondents do not know about LGSP. Among the male respondents 68.75 % knows about LGSP and among the female respondents only 6.89% know about LGSP (table 4).

Among the general respondents (46) who were informed about LGSP, of them 58.70% knew how much money came under LGSP in the UP in the last year and the rest of the percentage did not know about the block grant amount (table 4).

Table 4: Awareness analysis of the respondents (general people) about LGSP in the study area.

Awareness about LGSP analysis	Result							
	Belabo Union		Narayanpur Union		Binyabaid Union		Patuli Union	
	Know	Don't know	Know	Don't know	Know	Don't know	Know	Don't know
Union wise response of the respondents (general people) about LGSP, n=93	58.3%	41.7%	50%	50%	45.5%	54.5%	42.9%	57.1%
Union wise response of the respondents (general people) about LGSP in all four unions, n=93	Know				Don't know			
	49.46%				50.54%			
LGSP awareness among male and female respondents in all four unions, Male (n)=64 and Female (n) = 29	Male				Female			
	Know		Don't know		Know		Don't know	
	68.75%		31.25%		6.89%		93.11%	
Respondents (who knows about LGSP) response about block grant amount, n=46	Know				Don't know			
	58.70%				41.30%			

Source: Survey data



Source: Survey data

Out of the 46 respondents who knows about LGSP, 71.74% thinks that the budget allocated under LGSP is appropriately using for the local development and the rest of the respondents 28.26% do not think so (figure 3); they argued that the fund is using according to the desire of chairman, member and scheme implementation committee and they do not show any report to the people about the use of fund.

Participation Level in the Development Process:

Out of the 46 general respondents (who knew about LGSP), 39% had been participated at least one time in the development planning process under LGSP and rest 60.86% never took participation in the development-planning program, though they were aware about the program (figure 4). The number of respondents who were participated in the development planning process was 18 out of the total respondents (93). So here the people's participation rate is 19.35% (among the general respondent).

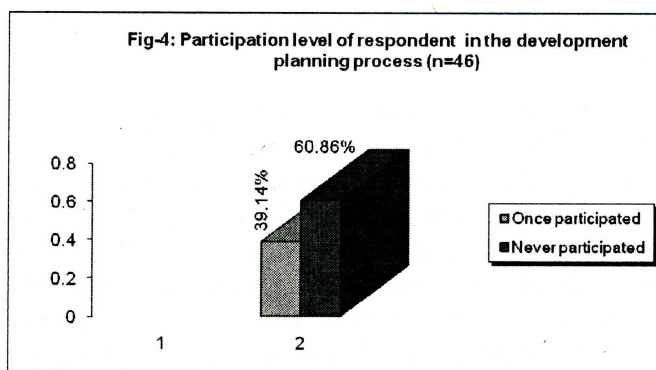
From figure 5 it is observed that among the participated respondents about 89% think that opinions given by the people in the development planning program had considered with proper importance and rest of the respondents (11%) differ from the others; they told that only the opinion of the influential persons are considered. From figure 6 it was also observed that about 72% respondents (who participated in the development planning process) think that people participate in the development planning program willingly and spontaneously but rest of the respondents 28% did not think so; they argued that people come to the meeting with a hope of getting something.

About 83% respondents (who participated in the development planning process) think that problem identification and priority decision making has done in their ward with the presence of the ward people but about 17% respondents differ this opinion (table 5); they told that we did not attend any such program where priority problem identification and decision making took place. About 89% respondents (who participated in the development planning process) think that in the process of project planning, people can give their opinion independently regarding their local common problems and solutions but about 11% respondent do not think so; they told that though we can speak independently but we are not valued properly, only the influential persons are evaluated (table 5). About 72% respondents (who participated in the development planning and implementation process) opined that after the intervention of LGSP, peoples' participation rate in the functions of Union Parishad has increased but the rate is not satisfactory (table 5).

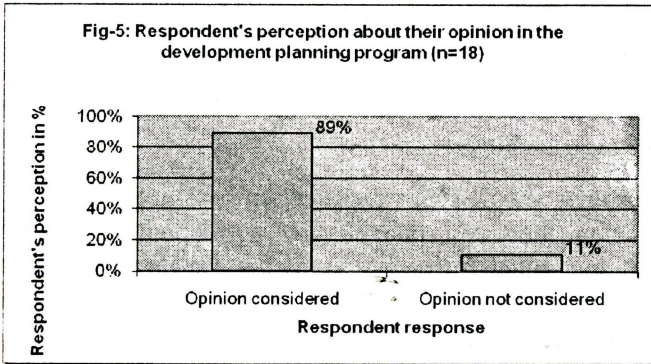
Table 5: Participation analysis by the respondents (who were participated in the development planning program) in the study area.

Respondents' perception/response	Result (n=18)	
	Positive response	Negative response
About problem identification and priority decision making.	83%	17%
About their freedom to give opinion in the development planning program.	89%	11%
About peoples' participation rate in the function of Union Parishad after the intervention of LGSP.	72%	28%

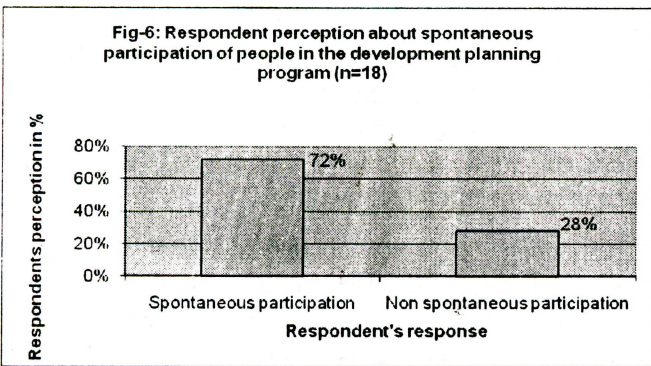
Source: Survey data



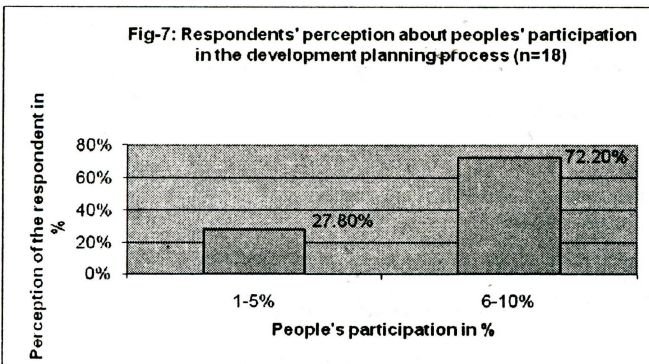
Source: Survey data



Source: Survey data



Source: Survey data



Source: Survey data

About 72% respondents' perception (who participated in the development planning process) was that the people who participate in the development planning process is about 6-10% of the total ward people and 28% respondents' perception is that about 1-5% of the total ward people

participate in the development planning program. From the perception of the respondents it can be said that around 10% of the ward people participate in the development planning process (figure 7).

Ensuring Accountability:

The intervention of LGSP has made significant impact on the peoples' involvement in the open budget meeting, which is making Union Parishad accountable to the people in the sense that people come to know how and where the budget is going to be utilized for local development and if, Union Parishad do not work as per open budget decision, people may have the option to give their opinion in the next election.

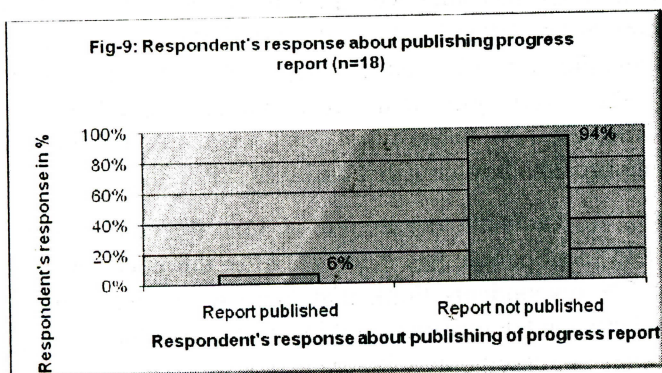
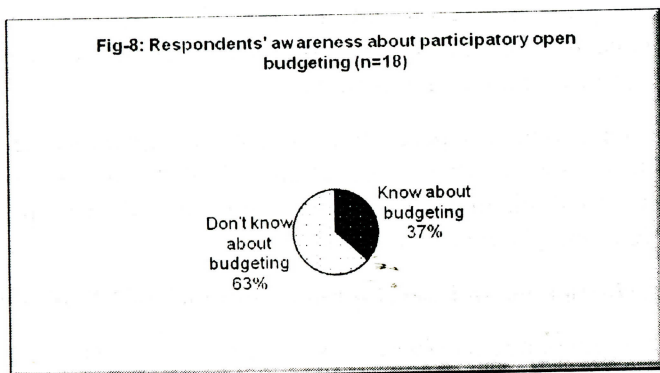
Among the 93 respondents (general people) 38% told that annual planning and budgeting has been finalized through open budget meeting at their union but a significant number of respondents (62%) told that they do not know anything about open budget meeting (figure 7). From field observations it was found that due to lack of sufficient publicity people are not aware of the open budget meeting.

Out of 18 respondents 61% opined that in the development planning process people of different classes participate and they give their opinion but 39% respondents think that only the selected people attend the open budget meeting and people are not much aware of the open budget meeting (table 6).

Table 6: Respondents' (who were participated in the development planning process) perception analysis in different aspects.

Respondent's perception	Result (n=18)	
	Positive response	Negative response
About the participation of people of different class in the development planning process.	61%	39%
About the participation of the people in the implementation process of LGSP.	44%	56%
About the priority of their demand in the implemented projects under LGSP.	94%	6%
On changes nature of accountability of UP after intervention of LGSP.	89%	11%

Source: Survey data



Source: Survey data

About 44% respondents think that peoples' participation in the project implementation process is satisfactory but 56% respondent think that peoples' participation in the implementation process is not satisfactory (table 6); They argued that member in the scheme implementation committee from the ward people are the political and influential persons, who makes unholy alliance with other members of the committee and general people do not know how they are spending the fund.

About 95% respondents told that Union Parishad do not produce any progress report about any ongoing project under LGSP in front the people and only about 5% respondents told that UP produce progress report before stakeholder. As per operational manual, SIC supposed to prepare a monthly progress report with the presence of stakeholders and to produce it before the ward people after every three months in an open meeting. This is a very important tool for ensuring accountability of SIC, but its level of practice is almost zero (figure 8). About 95% respondent thinks that demand of the local people has been given priority for the

implemented projects under LGSP and only 6% respondent differ this opinion (table 6); they think that projects are prioritized favoring the supporters of the chairman and members.

About 89% respondent's perception is that accountability of UP has increased to the people after introduction of LGSP and only about 11% respondent still think that UP functions are not fully transparent and accountable to the people (table 6).

Overall performance and development activities of UP after LGSP:

About 87% respondents (who knows about LGSP) believe that performance of UP has improved after the intervention of LGSP; they told that now-a-day, UP at least call them and ask them about the annual plan and people are involved in the implementation process when previously they were quite unaware about the annual plan of Union Parishad. The rest 13% believe that performance of UP did not change except some projects implemented under LGSP (table 7).

About 93% respondents' perception is that interaction between UP members and local people has increased after the intervention of LGSP and about 7% respondents think that there is no improvement in the interaction between UP members and local people (table 7); they told that interaction has increased only with the persons who are involved with the projects under LGSP.

All respondents (100%) (only general respondents who knows about LGSP) believe that development activities of UP have increased after the intervention of LGSP. About 65% respondents (only general respondents who knows about LGSP) believe that after the intervention of LGSP, it has created temporary employment opportunities for the poor women and unemployed people but rest 35% respondent think that the projects taken under LGSP only for the time being and only a very few number of people can get opportunity to work under LGSP (table 7).

Table 7: Respondents' (who were participated in the development planning process) perception analysis in different aspects.

Perception/Response of the respondents	Result (n=18)	
	Positive response/Perception	Negative response/Perception
About the performance of Union Parishad after the intervention of LGSP.	87%	13%
About the interaction between local people and UP after the intervention of LGSP.	93%	7%
About the development activities of UP after the intervention of LGSP.	100%	0%
About the creation of employment opportunity due to the intervention of LGSP.	65%	35%
About the impact of the projects implemented under LGSP.	100%	0%

Almost all respondent said that the projects, which had been implemented under LGSP is creating positive impacts on their lives or on the society because people are benefitting continually from the implemented projects.

Assessment of LGSP by the member of SIC and SSC:

Total nineteen members (twelve from scheme implementation committee and seven from scheme supervision committee) were interviewed to assess the role of LGSP from their perspectives.

Almost 100% (19) respondent said that peoples' participation has increased in the function of Union Parishad after the intervention of LGSP but this number is not so significant. They also said that accountability of UP has increased to the people because now people know about the budget and UP is bound to implement it as the general people are involved in the scheme implementation committee (table 8).

Table 8: Perception analysis of the member of SIC & SSC in different aspects of LGSP.

Respondents' Perception (member of SIC & SSC)	Result (n=19)	
	Positive response/perception	Negative response/perception
About peoples' participation & increasing accountability of UP after intervention of LGSP.	100%	0%
About the use of budget allocated under LGSP.	89% (using properly)	11% (not using properly)
About the creation of employment opportunity under LGSP.	79% (created opportunity)	21% (not created opportunity)

Source: Survey data

Out of 19 respondents, 89% believe that the budget allocated under LGSP is appropriately being used for local development but 11% respondent think that a portion of the budget is used incongruously. They argued that a portion of the budget is used for giving bribe to the Upazila engineer to make the project design and estimation and to the audit team for performing audit even though the accounts have no problems (table 8).

About 79% respondents think that LGSP has created temporary employment opportunity for the poor people and 21% respondents think that LGSP has created work opportunity for unemployed people only for few days (table 8).

Assessment of LGSP by Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNO):

Total of five (5) UNOs were interviewed to evaluate the performance of LGSP who were related officially in the implementation process of LGSP. Among them, four (4) UNOs think that LGSP is partially successful in involving the peoples' participation in the local development activities spontaneously and one (1) UNO thinks that LGSP is moderately successful in this regard. All five UNOs think that LGSP is partially successful to ensure the accountability and transparency in the activities of Union Parishad and they also think that LGSP is partially successful for increasing the capacity of Union Parishad.

Only 1 UNO thinks that LGSP had created employment opportunity for the women & poor people and 4 UNO think that LGSP could not create employment opportunity for the women and poor people. All five UNO said that the fund allocated under LGSP is not received timely which create problem for proper implementation of the project. Among the five UNOs, four UNO think that LGSP is not playing the role to eradicate poverty directly but it is creating positive impact on the life style in the society.

Assessment of LGSP by Deputy Director Local Government (DDLG):

Out of the 11 DDLG, 10 think that LGSP is partially successful in involving the people's participation in the local development activities spontaneously and same percentage of DDLG think that LGSP is partially successful in ensuring the accountability and transparency in the activities of Union Parishad and increasing the capacity of Union Parishad.

Only 1 DDLG thinks that LGSP has created employment opportunity for the women and poor people and 10 DDLG think that LGSP could not create employment opportunity for the women and poor people. All DDLG (11) said that the fund allocated under LGSP is not received in the field level timely. Ten (10) DDLG think that LGSP is not playing its role to eradicate poverty directly but it is creating temporary work opportunity for the poor people.

Assessment of LGSP by the member of Union Parishad:

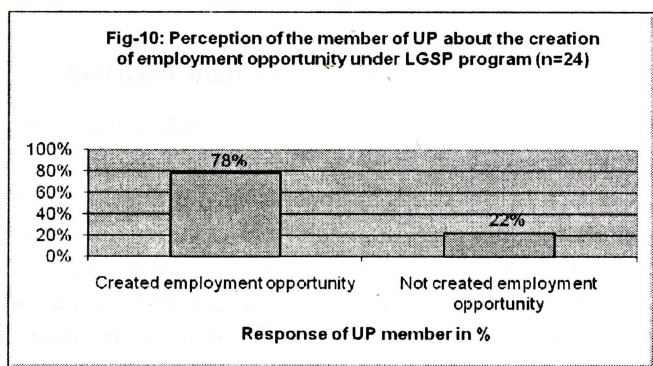
Total eighteen members of Union Parishad (including both chairman and member) were interviewed. Among them, 83% thinks that LGSP is moderately successful in involving people in the development planning and implementation process. From the field experience and the positive attitude of these members it can be interpreted that though LGSP is not fully successful in involving the people' participation in the function of Union Parishad activities but the present scenario is far better than what went before. 17% respondents think that LGSP is partially successful in involving people in its activities because people are too careless to participate and do not feel ownership and they think it is wastage of time. About 78% respondents think that LGSP is moderately successful in increasing the capacity and ensuring accountability of Union Parishad; they told that after the intervention of LGSP, now they are closer to the

people for decision making and implementation process and also in implementing many small projects which are fulfilling the local demands. They also told that we have been given training and our activities are supervised continuously by the Upazila and district facilitator; all these activities have helped the Union Parishad to increase their capacity and to be accountable to the people. 22% respondents assume that LGSP is partially successful in ensuring accountability and increasing efficiency of UPs; they told that the grant under LGSP is too small to take big projects to involve people to a great extent, and give training to the UP members (table-9).

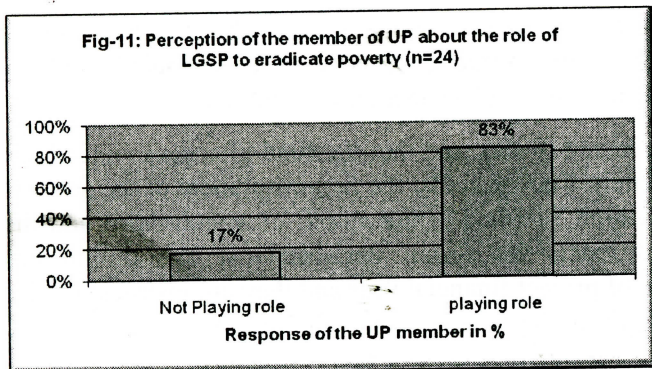
Table 9: Perception analysis of the member of Union Parishad regarding peoples' participation and accountability of Union Parishad.

Perception of the member of UP	Result (n=24)		
	Partially success	Moderately success	Completely success
About the success of LGSP to involve the peoples' participation in the local development activities.	17%	83%	0%
About the success of LGSP in ensuring accountability and increasing capacity of Union Parishad.	22%	78%	0%

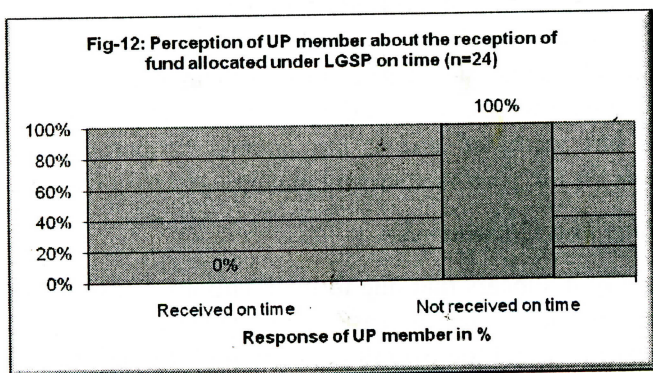
Source: Survey data



Source: Survey data



Source: Survey data



Source: Survey data

78% respondents believe that LGSP has created employment opportunity for the women and poor people; they told that implementation of the projects taken by UPs under LGSP has created job opportunity for the unemployed people but 22% respondents believe that projects under LGSP are not able to create permanent job opportunity; they argued that such projects are only for the time being and a very few people get opportunity to work for a small period of time (figure 10).

According to the sec 2.3.1 (e) of the Union Parishad Operational Manual 2009, projects under LGSP have to consider, after analysis, the fact whether it will play supplementary role to eradicate poverty in the rural area. Surveyed data showed, 83 % respondents perceive that LGSP is playing a role to eradicate poverty; they said that unemployed poor people can earn from their involvement with the projects under LGSP which help them to eradicate poverty but rest of respondents (17%) think that LGSP are not capable to eradicate poverty; they argued that with such

small projects, poverty eradication is impossible and they also argued that to eradicate poverty in true sense, large projects should be initiated so that it creates long term employment opportunity (figure 11).

All respondents (100%) said that the fund allocated under LGSP is not received timely. They told that the first installment of the projects usually reach the Union Parishad in the month of March-April and the second installment reach the Union Parishad just one month before the completion of project financial year and they are instructed to implement the budget within the financial year (figure 12).

So from the above analysis and observations it can be summarized that fifty percent respondents of the study area have no idea about LGSP and specially the women are quite unaware about it. The rest fifty percent respondents, who aware about it, expressed their opinion positively and they believe that after the intervention of LGSP, accountability of UP to the people has increased and it has created temporary employment opportunities for the poor women and unemployed people.

Observations and Conclusions:

From the study it appears that due to interventions of LGSP, the overall performance of the UP has increased and objectives of the LGSP have succeeded partially and the overall perception of the beneficiaries about the performance of LGSP is positive in the study area.

Block grant

Most important part of LGSP is fiscal transfer or block grant transfer from ministry to the UPs. From data analysis it is evident that people specially the women are not much aware of LGSP and its fund. Awareness should be increased among the people. From analysis it is seen that fund of LGSP is being appropriately used for the development activities but corruption exists, which should be checked. Allocated block grant of LGSP should reach timely and the amount of block grant should also be increased.

Most of the respondents (89%) of SIC and SSC think that the fund allocated under LGSP is appropriately used for local development activities. Rest of the member of SIC and SSC makes allegations against Upazila Engineer and audit team for taking bribes for project design and for performing audit.

All UNO, DDLG and member of SIC, SSC and UP said that the fund allocated under LGSP is not received timely which creates problem for implementation of the projects. They also said that the amount of block grant is not sufficient for the Union Parishad to take a big project that can create permanent employment opportunities for the poor people.

Peoples' participation

Peoples' participation rate in the development activities is not satisfactory. From data analysis it is seen that people do not feel interested in participating because they do not feel ownership and they calculate the opportunity cost for the time they will spend in such meeting. Specially the poor people and women think that they will not be evaluated in such program. Sometimes people are not being properly informed by the UP; consequently they cannot participate in the meeting.

Among the interviewed UNO and DDLG, 80% UNO and 91% DDLG think that LGSP is partially successful in involving the people in the local development activities. Among the interviewed UP member and chairman, 83% of them believe that LGSP is successful in participating the people in the UP activities.

From the above analysis it can be concluded that peoples' participation rate in the functions of Union Parishad has increased in comparison to the past but the participation rate is still far from the desirable standard.

Ensuring accountability

One of the main objectives of LGSP is ensuring peoples' participation of all cases in the open budget meeting and in the development planning and implementation process to institutionalize accountability.

Though more than fifty percent general people are not aware of open budget but a good number of respondents believe that that transparency and accountability of UPs is increased to a significant level. In terms of project selection, implementation and public money spending, the people at large perceive more accountability and transparency. All respondents of SIC and SSC told that accountability of UP has increased to the people and the general perception of the UNO and DDLG (who are respondent of this study), LGSP is partially successful in ensuring the accountability and transparency in the activities of UP.

From observations it can be concluded that peoples' participation of different classes in the budget and development-planning process has increased but still there are some loopholes in the open budget preparation and implementation process. Regulatory forum and policy formulation is essential to minimize these loopholes for institutionalizing accountability in the UP.

Overall Performance and Development Activities of UP:

About 87% respondents (who were participated in the development planning process) believe that performance of UP has increased after the intervention of LGSP and most of the respondents' (93%) perception is that local peoples' interaction with UP has increased. Almost all respondents believe that development activities in the UP have increased after LGSP. All UNO (who are respondents) thinks that LGSP is partially successful for increasing the capacity of UP. All members of UP (who are respondents) told that overall performance of UP has increased after LGSP but the training given to the elected representatives is not sufficient to implement the objectives of LGSP.

From the above observations it can be summarized that overall performance and development activities of UP has increased but still UPs are in lack of manpower and logistic support. Need based extensive training is necessary for the elected representatives of UP.

Employment opportunity

According to the sec 2.3.1(e) of the Union Parishad Operational Manual 2009, projects under LGSP have to select emphasizing the fact that it creates employment opportunity especially for the women and helpless people.

From the analysis it can be said that the projects implemented under LGSP are creating positive impacts on the society and are not capable of creating permanent employment opportunity for the poor people. If the block grant amount is increased then it is possible to take big projects that may create employment opportunity for the unemployed people and play its role to eradicate poverty.

From the above data analysis and observations, it can be concluded that the LGSP is an excellent start for the journey towards strengthening Union Parishad but at present, this project is too short to achieve its objectives. So the duration of this project should be increased. The

perception of the general respondents who had participated in the development planning process is very positive and they said that after the introduction of LGSP, people are very enthusiastic about the functions of Union Parishad.

Recommendations and Policy Options:

To achieve the objectives of LGSP, the following recommendations and policy options may be considered:

Block Grant

To achieve objectives of the LGSP, specific recommendations about block grants are as follows

- Block grants of LGSP should be transferred from ministry to the UPs within at least 2-3 months ahead of the project year.
- The amount of block grants should be increased so that UPs can undertake income-generating projects for the creation of long-term employment opportunity for the unemployed people.
- For administrative and miscellaneous expenditure of UNO, DDLG and UPs, extra allocation should be earmarked in the block grants scheme.
- Field observations suggest that the LGED Engineer seem to be a reluctant partner in the design and technical support function of LGSP. Appropriate measures should be taken to make the Upazila Engineer an active catalyst agent of the LGSP.

Peoples' Participation

From the present study it has been observed that peoples' participation rate in the functions of UPs is not satisfactory. Without active participation of community people of all strata in every aspect of the functions of Union Parishad, ensuring accountability is almost impossible. The followings are the specific recommendations to increase the peoples' participation in the UPs.

- Mass awareness of the rural people as designed on the LGSP must be implemented positively to enhance social awareness and participation.
- To attract people in the budget preparation and development-

planning program, some strategies may be followed as for example after such program, musical amusement and provisions of light refreshment may inspire people to participate in the functions of UPs.

- Non-government organizations (NGO) should be encouraged and used in inspiring people for participating in the functions of Union Parishad with particular focus on LGSP.
- Other mechanisms like poster, leaflet, announcement and motivations are indispensable for creating awareness among the people before development planning and budgeting.

Ensuring Accountability

Although most of the respondents who were participated in the development planning process thinks that accountability to the people of Union Parishad has increased however it did not institutionalize until now. To institutionalize accountability, the present study suggests the following recommendations:

- Adequate supervision and monitoring should be increased by the Local Government Department of the Ministry of Local Government Rural Development and Cooperatives (LGRD&C).
- For intensifying the supervisions and monitoring, transportation cost/vehicle facilities and other miscellaneous expenditure should be provided to the UNOs and DDLGs.
- Independent audit cell should be set up in the Upazila level.
- Peoples' participation in every aspect of Union Parishad is the most important mechanism for ensuring accountability. Government should provide all sorts of financial and logistic support to the UNOs, District Facilitator (DF), relevant NGOs and Union Parishad (UPs) for the maximum level of peoples participation.
- According to the LGSP operational Manual, UPs those who will not publish progress report on the ongoing projects under LGSP, should be dropped from further block grants.

Overall Performance and Development activities of Union Parishad

To increase overall performance and development activities of UPs, the following are the specific recommendations of the present study:

- Need based extensive trainings for the elected representatives and members of the SIC and SSC is essential so that they can efficiently utilize the fund allocated under LGSP.
- All sorts of logistic support should be provided to the UPs immediately.
- Necessary manpower, at least one sub assistant engineer, one computer operator, one accountant and one MLSS should be appointed immediately for smooth running of UPs.

Employment Opportunity

To create employment opportunity for the women and needy people, the following are the specific recommendations for the present study:

- Block grant amount should be increased to at least ten lacs in each financial year.
- Union Parishad should take extended income generating projects with the collaboration of private organizations, which will create employment opportunity.
- Authority should be provided to the Union Parishad for mobilizing the common property resources (CPR) e.g natural forest, use of khas land, and cultivation of fish in the jalmahal using block grant under LGSP etc.

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