



Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II Local Project Appraisal Committee Meeting

Record of discussions

Project title : Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II
Meeting date and venue : 10 June 2015, 18th floor meeting room (UNDP)
Participants : See annex

Welcome Remarks

The Chairperson of the committee Ms. Pauline Tamesis, Country Director, UNDP Bangladesh welcomed participants and highlighted the contribution of village courts project in the resolution of local disputes. The Chairperson thanked the Local Government Division (LGD) for releasing 50% of cash contribution of USD 1 (one) million for Phase I of the project. In addition, Ms. Tamesis also emphasized on the importance of the approval of proposed ProDoc by all stakeholders urgently so that the Phase-II of this project can be started without any interruption after the completion of Phase-I by December 2015.

Presentation on 'Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh Phase II'

With the consent of the Chairperson, Mr. Salahuddin Khan, Program Analyst, UNDP presented the draft ProDoc for Phase II. The presentation covered project snapshot, selection criteria of 1,000 Unions, indicative budget, key activities, results and management arrangement etc.

Points of discussion

At the end of the presentation, the Chairperson invited the participants to offer their comments and suggestions. Following the presentation, the Additional Secretary of the Local Government Division and National Project Director of ongoing AVCB project Mr. Md. Sirajul Islam thanked EU and UNDP for the financial support they provided for the current phase. He additionally stated that the Government is keen on moving the Project forward and GoB's contribution of USD 1 million is a testament to the Government's commitment for the activation of village courts in Bangladesh. He reiterated the GOB contribution of USD 5

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million for Phase II of the project and at the same time requested the Development Partners to explore the possibility to increase financial assistance that will enable GoB to cover more Union Parishads. One of the main concerns he had was the extent to which NGO dependency would continue and how sustainable the reduction would be for the overall Project.

Ms. Shamima Nargis, Additional Secretary (UN-1), ERD raised few issues. Regarding transfer of GOB contribution of USD 5 (five) million to UNDP's account as stated in the draft ProDoc, she opined that the issue needs to be discussed with pertinent ministry particularly with Finance Division before signing the Pro-doc as Finance Division allowed the transfer of GOB contribution (approximately equivalent to \$ 1 million) in phase-1 as single out exceptional arrangement which cannot be cited as precedence. She suggested to insert an appropriate clause in the relevant section of the ProDoc that will enable UNDP and GoB to discuss further to define the modality of using GOB contribution. She suggested to insert an appropriate clause in the relevant section of the ProDoc that will enable UNDP and GoB to discuss further to define the modality of transfer of fund to UNDP's bank account.

Ms. Nargis also brought up points concerning the reduction of NGO's dependency and necessity of consent from LGSP to use their computer at UP level for VCMIS. She explained that though NGOs dependency has been reduced significantly in the proposed project but UNDP can further review and identify the areas where their involvement could be reduced, if possible. She added that the Project Document and TPP need to match with each other for getting approval and suggested UNDP to share the ProDoc with ERD/ LGD immediately so that LGD starts preparing the TPP accordingly. As UNDP is processing their ProDoc, GOB also needs a reasonable time for drafting the TPP. It would not be adequate or practical to send the pro-doc at the last moment expecting the TPP would be ready in no time. In fact, UNDP should engage the functional team of the project for initiating discussion on the draft pro-doc because LGD might have some observations on the matters outlined in ProDoc. She also asked to provide the details of the administrative cost for the proposed project.

Related to the budget breakdown in the presentation Ms Nargis & EU highlighted that administrative costs need to revised, they seem to be high. EU reminded of the provision of the agreements between EU and UN of a maximum 7 % overhead costs.

The EU representatives stressed that the Financing Agreement with GoB should be signed as soon as possible certainly within December 2015 otherwise the funds of the project will be lost, therefore the Bangladeshi authorities concerned need to finalize the TPP simultaneously. Regarding Project Evaluation by the IMED as it is required for the approval

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of TPP for a follow up phase (Phase II), EU drew the attention of LGD to take necessary action with urgency. The EU representatives stated that they expect to share the documents (Financing Agreement) with the ERD soon. Additionally, they mentioned that EU would like to support rolling out of VC services in CHT. They suggested a feasibility study to be conducted at the beginning of phase II to explore the potentials of rolling out of VC services in CHT. ERD Desk UN, present at the meeting, was urged to ensure internal coordination with the ERD Desk EU and externally with all Ministries involved.

EU delegation representatives raised that according to the criteria imposed by the Finance Ministry regarding deployment of the Assistant Accountant-cum-Computer Operator (AACO) at UP level, only 25% UPs will be eligible to get AACO. EU suggested LGD to pursue for a possible relaxation of this criteria by the Finance Ministry and requested a copy of the letter of the Ministry of Finance to LGD on eligibility of the Assistant Accountant cum Computer Operator positions.

Ms. Blerta Cela, Assistant Country Director, RRM, UNDP requested LGD to forward the TPP to Planning Ministry soon. She also highlighted that the UNDP has a very strict budget and requested to all partners specially EU to consider UNDP as implementing organization rather than a donor which already been discussed in the donor's meeting. She also mentioned that as on-going AVCB pilot project (Phase I) is going to end on 13th December 2015, the PAGODA for Phase-II should be signed with a starting date of 14 December 2015 for phase II.

The Country Director, UNDP Bangladesh expressed her expectation that ProDoc and Financing Agreement need to be signed soon to avoid any gap between two phases. Regarding signing of other documents and accomplishment of approval procedures on time, she suggested to make an 'Action Tree on Priority Work' those need to be addressed immediately. In this connection ERD representative Ms. Shamima Nargis requested UNDP to send a letter to ERD indicating the expected timeline for signing the ProDoc along with the document so that it can readily be sent to LGD for taking necessary preparations for preparing the TPP.

The summary of the Decisions:

On the basis of the above discussion, following decisions have been made and the required revision would be made in the ProDoc:

- i. The exact modality of utilizing GOB contribution USD 5 (five) million, should be kept open which would be finalized through an inter-ministerial agreement.

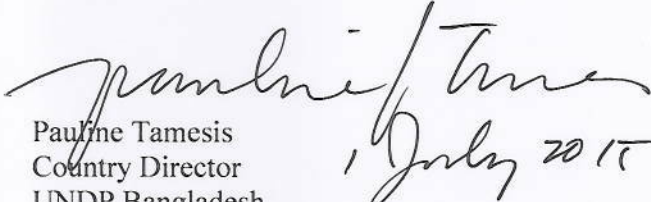


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- ii. UNDP will send the ProDoc to ERD indicating the expected deadline of signature of the document;
- iii. UNDP will send PAGoDA Anex 1, Budget and Communication & Visibility Plan (Annex 6) to EU soon.
- iv. LGD will send a letter to IMED requesting for conducting the evaluation of Phase-I for expediting the TPP approval process for Phase II without any delay;
- v. As ongoing AVCB pilot project (Phase I) is going to end on 13th December 2015, the starting date of implementation of Phase-II would be 14th December 2015.
- vi. The instruction of the Finance Division and LGD for follow up letter to FD on the restrictive criteria for Union eligibility or the post of an Assistant Accountant-cum-Computer Operator (AACO) to be provided to UNDP and EU.

With the above observations the Local Project Appraisal Committee (LPAC) endorsed the Phase II proposal and requested incorporation of the recommendations made by the participants.

Approved by


Pauline Tamesis
Country Director
UNDP Bangladesh

Attachments

Annex I: List of participants