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**STRENGTHENING
DEMOCRATIC LOCAL
GOVERNANCE (SDLG)
PROGRAM IN BANGLADESH
QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE PROGRESS
REPORT – NO. 6: APRIL 1, 2013 – JUNE 30, 2013**

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DISCLAIMER

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BUPF	Bangladesh Union Parishad Forum
CiG	Citizens-in-Governance forum
COR	Contracting Officer's Representative
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GIS	Geographic Information System
HDI	Howard Delafield International
HLP	Horizontal Learning Program
LCG	Local Consultative Group
LG	Local Government
LGCI	Local Government Capacity Index
LGSP	Local Government Support Program
LGU	Local Government Unit
MAB	Municipal Association of Bangladesh
MLGRD	Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives
MP	Member of Parliament
MPG	Media Professionals Group
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
PMP	Performance Monitoring Plan
PNGO	Partner Nongovernmental Organization
PSP	Participatory Strategic Planning
SDLG	Strengthening Democratic Local Governance Program
UDCC	Union Development Coordination Committee
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UP	Union Parishad
US	Unnayan Shamannay
UZPAB	Upazila Parishad Association of Bangladesh
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Strengthening Democratic Local Governance (SDLG) in Bangladesh Project is a 39-month activity (December 2010 – March 2014) funded by the USAID/Bangladesh Mission. Building on more than a decade's worth of local government strengthening programs in Bangladesh, the SDLG Project combines a focus on research and policy advocacy, capacity development for local government associations, and training and technical assistance for local government units at union parishad (UP), upazila parishad and Municipal levels. Tetra Tech ARD is the implementing partner for the SDLG Project.

Major SDLG Project objectives are to:

- **Expand the roles and authorities of local governments:** Stimulate evidence-based policy dialogue at the national level, test/disseminate innovative practices and partnerships with local governments, and demonstrate the benefits to policymakers;
- **Strengthen and expand the capacity of local government associations:** Work with the existing union and municipal local government associations – the Bangladesh Union Parishad Forum (BUPF) and Municipal Association of Bangladesh (MAB), respectively -- to articulate emerging policy dialogue issues and advocate for legal and policy reform on behalf of their constituencies, and strengthen their member communications and financial sustainability. We will also help form a unified association of upazilas, the Upazila Parishad Association of Bangladesh (UZPAB);
- **Improve and expand the service delivery and resource mobilization of local government units:** Work to expand existing capacities of Union Parishads (UPs) and municipalities. We will also help the newly forming Upazila-level governments to understand and utilize their service delivery and resource mobilization authorities; as we do this, we will support elected women officials at all local levels by clarifying roles and responsibilities and strengthening their capacities; and
- **Ensure public participation, accountability and transparency in local government finances and decision making:** Increase the participation of citizens, including women and youth, through citizen participation forums, newly legislated Ward Committees, Open Budget meetings and activated Standing Committees and other local participatory strategies.

Our technical strategy involves building on USAID/Bangladesh's history of local governance support programs; linking with USAID/Bangladesh's and other donor's programs; integrating global and local lessons learned and proven tools for successful and sustainable local governance programming; identifying, developing and demonstrating to local governments innovative practices to improve performance; integrating gender and youth concerns across the SDLG program while supporting women's participation; and acquiring, developing and disseminating through multiple media information on the SDLG and local governments in Bangladesh.

The report is organized to provide information on project performance in relationship to the Year 3 Work Plan. The project work plans were organized according to broad Components, subsidiary Task Areas and proposed Activities under each Task Area.

CHALLENGE: FLUCTUATIONS IN USAID PROJECT SPENDING

During the last reporting period in February, 2013 USAID advised the SDLG project team and Tetra Tech ARD that project spending had to be scaled back significantly due to limited available funding. In response to this challenge, SDLG quickly reviewed options for revisions to the project work plan and discussed these

with then-USAID COR, Patrick Bowers. A large portion of project spending dedicated to field training of 500 LGUs was sharply reduced, along with cuts to every project component and most activities. As part of the Tetra Tech ARD effort to handle these changes professionally, Senior Technical Advisor/Manager, Jesse Biddle visited Dhaka in early March, 2013 (at Tetra Tech ARD expense) to participate in the announcement of these changes to SDLG's many local grant and subcontract partners.

During the current reporting period in May 2013, SDLG received positive assurances from the new SDLG COR, Sherina Tabassum, that an additional \$1.3 million in funding specifically requested for the SDLG project had been received and was able to restore some of the activities reduced after USAID's earlier request to slow spending. The additional funds are expected to positively affect sustainability of project results by allowing the continuation of concentrated technical assistance for the large majority of moderately performing LGUs.

As of the submission of this report, obligated funding totaled \$11.6 million of the original \$19.6 million contract budget total with an additional obligation of \$1.3 million pending for a total of \$12.9 million to be made available.

2.0 SDLG PROGRESS BY COMPONENT AND TASK AREAS

2.1 COMPONENT 1: ROLES AND AUTHORITIES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES IN BRIEF

Major Achievements

This Component combines research, a series of advocacy events designed to promote more informed public discussions and debate, and behind the scenes efforts to build policy maker consensus on specific reforms designed to increase local government authority. This Component also includes work with women leaders from union, municipal and upazila local governments, and domestic and international study tours.

In the previous reporting period, SDLG selected research partner Unnayan Shamannay (US) through a competitive process to undertake research on local government advocacy activities by international donor partners and Bangladeshi NGOs to inform SDLG advocacy strategy and planning.

During the April 2013 to June 2013 reporting period:

- **Research Initiated on Local Government Advocacy Activities** – Research organization Unnayan Shamannay conducted interviews with development partners and Bangladeshi NGOs with active advocacy initiatives to identify common themes, strategies and lessons. This research will inform planning for a series of advocacy events with SDLG prior to the December national parliamentary election. Submission of the research report is expected early in Q3 2013.
- **5 SDLG Districts Join Peer Learning Program** – After consultation with the World Bank’s Horizontal Learning Program (HLP), SDLG introduced LG leaders in five of its 22 districts to HLP and assisted them in supporting their districts to join HLP. HLP in-country study tours support peer learning and sharing of good and ‘best’ practices among the country’s union councils.

Major Challenges

- There were no major research and advocacy challenges during the reporting period.

ACHIEVEMENTS BY WORK PLAN TASK AREAS

2.1.1 TASK A: RESEARCH AND INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

TASK A, ACTIVITY 1: LOCAL GOVERNANCE POLICY RESEARCH PROGRAM (YEARS 2 AND 3)

Current Status: Phase I Completed. Phase II Initiated. As noted above, for Phase II research activities, grant recipient Unnayan Shammanoy (US) conducted research activities during the reporting period. Under the grant, the US research will help SDLG understand the overall landscape of LG policy advocacy in Bangladesh through assessing ongoing initiatives by local NGOs and international actors, identifying important issues for reform, and informing planning of small meetings with key policy makers including MPs of related Parliamentary standing committees and influential political party leaders.

With the receipt of an additional \$1.3 million in funding, US will be able to conduct a second set of activities under the same grant including meetings with sub-national level bureaucracy, preparation of a best practices case studies of selected LGUs and holding of a national conference prior to the national election to disseminate messages of policy reform and good practice.

TASK A, ACTIVITY 2: SUPPORT REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES TO DEVELOP LOCAL GOVERNANCE RESEARCH CAPACITIES (YEARS 2 AND 3)

Current Status: Completed previously.

2.1.2 TASK B: POLICY DIALOGUE

TASK B, ACTIVITY 1: LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDER POLITICAL MAPPING (YEAR 1)

Current Status: Completed previously.

TASK B, ACTIVITY 2: OPINION POLLING ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM ISSUES (YEAR 1)

Current Status: Completed previously.

TASK B, ACTIVITY 3: LOCAL GOVERNANCE POLICY REFORM ROUNDTABLES (YEARS 1 AND 2)

Current Status: Completed previously.

TASK B, ACTIVITY 4: CONSENSUS-BUILDING DIALOGUES (YEARS 1 AND 2)

Current Status: Completed previously.

TASK B, ACTIVITY 5: CLOSED DOOR MEETINGS (YEAR 3)

Current Status: Planned. Under the grant with US, six small group meetings with policy makers and political party leaders on policy reform initiatives will begin in the next reporting period.

TASK B, ACTIVITY 6: NATIONAL CONFERENCE (YEAR 3)

Current Status: No national conference activity was conducted in the reporting period.

With the receipt of an additional \$1.3 million in funding, grantee US will conduct one national conference in the pre-election period in late 2013 as noted above.

2.1.3 TASK C: INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

TASK C, ACTIVITY 1: INVENTORY/TOOLKIT OF LG STRENGTHENING PRACTICES (YEAR 1)

Current Status: Completed previously.

TASK C, ACTIVITY 2: SUPPORT TO WOMEN'S COMMITTEES OF LG ASSOCIATIONS (YEARS 1 - 3)

Current Status: Ongoing. With the receipt of an additional \$1.3 million in funding, SDLG completed planning for a series of leadership training sessions in each of Bangladesh's seven divisions for women local government representatives from BUPF and MAB to begin in Q3 2013. These follow a similar series of trainings for UzPAB during the previous September to March reporting period, and will be lead by the Component 2 Team Leader with support from DCOP Zarina Rahman Khan.

TASK C, ACTIVITY 3: IN-COUNTRY STUDY TOURS FOR LG OFFICIALS (YEARS 1 - 3)

Current Status: Ongoing. Early in the reporting period, SDLG met with representatives from the World Bank-sponsored Horizontal Learning Program (HLP) for a detailed discussion of the program operations. HLP is a proven program to support peer learning now in its second phase and based at the National Institute for Local Government (NILG) training institute with WB technical assistance. Since it requires a number of activities, HLP contracts with agents (NGOs, private firms, or others) to provide support in each district it operates in. Inclusion in the program is initiated through requests by Union Parishad leaders via upazila level government officers.

In response to a request from HLP, SDLG agreed to introduce the HLP program to SDLG-trained UP leaders in the five districts of Rangpur, Naogaon, Jamalpur, Sirajganj and Bhola through its field teams. By the end of the reporting period, upazila officers in all five districts had submitted formal requests to NILG for district participation in the HLP program.

TASK C, ACTIVITY 4: INTERNATIONAL STUDY TOUR FOR LG ASSOCIATION OFFICIALS (YEARS 1 - 3)

Current Status: Ongoing As detailed in the report ending March 31, 2013, SDLG completed a successful study tour to the Philippines in November 2012 and prior to that a 2011 tour to Kerala, India for women elected representatives. With the receipt of an additional \$1.3 million in funding, a study tour to Indonesia is planned in November 2013.

2.1.4 TASK D: PARTNERSHIP BUILDING

As discussed in previous reports, SDLG integrated this task into activities designed to activate Standing Committees at the union and upazila levels as part of Components 3 and 4 capacity building.

2.2 COMPONENT 2: ADVOCACY AND CAPACITY BUILDING OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATIONS

Major Achievements

This Component focuses on strengthening the governance, financial sustainability, membership loyalty and internal democratic practices of Bangladesh's existing local government associations MAB and BUPF, and supporting the establishment of the new Upazila Parishad Association of Bangladesh or UzPAB. Major achievements during the April 2013 to June 2013 reporting period include:

- **Second Round Dues Collection Workshops Held for BUPF and UzPAB:** - Following dues collection workshops with all three LG associations in the last reporting period, SDLG held two workshops for BUPF and one extending meeting for UzPAB in May and June to review collection progress. Working committee members drawn from District/Divisional and Executive Committees gathered to set new targets and make individual commitments to persuade and motivate a specific number of councils to pay membership dues. Meetings included presentations by Secretariat staff on

membership and dues status, association operational costs, and the percentage membership needed to sustain operations without USAID support.

- **Association Building Completed, Board Management and Sustainability Training Initiated**– With SDLG support, the consultant team completed the remaining three of seven Association Building trainings for BUPF in April. These trainings were suspended for MAB. As of June 30, the team had completed six of seven Board Management and Financial Sustainability trainings for BUPF which also served to introduce the necessity and mechanics of dues collection to a large number of BUPF leaders.
- **Quarterly newsletters prepared by MAB, BUPF and UzPAB** – Drawing on software training and pre-set formats received from SDLG subcontractor UNITREND, the staff of the Secretariat offices in conjunction with association members prepared quarterly newsletters in June with limited editing inputs from SDLG staff. Print orders were submitted at the end of the Q2 reporting period. From the next quarter, the newsletter production process is expected to be independently managed by the association secretariats without the need for SLDG technical assistance.

Major Challenges

While SDLG successfully supported regional and national elections for all three associations including the formation of UzPAB in 2012, conducted well attended strategic planning workshops resulting in action plans to build membership and increase dues in early 2012, and delivered several trainings to association committees which included sessions on financial independence in late 2012 into 2013, several factors have been identified by the Component 2 team as contributing to slow progress in association membership dues collection.

- **BUPF - Barriers to Membership Support** – Factors contributing to slow dues collection include:
 - Full support for office operations and association activities with no requirement for dues collection or cost sharing by previous USAID projects since 2006. Re-elected BUPF leaders did not welcome SDLG’s early insistence on cost sharing and dues collection.
 - The 2011 election of first-time UP chairs in 93% of unions resulting in the loss of several strong, proactive BUPF leaders and a lack of understanding by new UP members about BUPF, its mission, vision, and past successes in establishing UP rights.
 - Inability of BUPF leaders to persuade the government to fulfill any of the ‘eight demands’ they promoted among union council leaders.
- **MAB – Centralization and Political Ambitions** – While MAB has been most successful in dues collection so far and successfully lobbied to include dues payment as a line item in municipal budgets, it only recently established a follow-up system for dues collection. MAB decision-making continues to be leader centric and dominated by a small group of ruling party supporters, creating some resentment among potential members. The individual political ambitions of many mayors with key positions on regional and executive councils also hinder association decision-making and dues collection.
- **UzPAB – Demoralized Membership, MP Candidates** – Several attempts by UzPAB and others since 2009 to strengthen the authority of Upazila Parishad Chairs and Vice-Chairs have been unsuccessful. MPs and UNOs continue to have a greater influence in upazila decision making. This situation has demoralized many Chairs and Vice Chairs who also show little enthusiasm for UzPAB membership. A small group of upazila chairs with close ties to the government also maintains a competing ‘association’ and rejects UzPAB membership. Finally, several key UzPAB leaders are pursuing their party’s support for MP candidate nominations and are reluctant to lend their time and effort to dues collection.

ACHIEVEMENTS BY WORK PLAN TASK AREAS

2.2.1 TASK A: TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

TASK A, ACTIVITY 1: SUPPORT MAB ELECTIONS FOR REGIONAL COMMITTEES AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (YEAR 2)

Current Status: Completed previously.

TASK A, ACTIVITY 2: APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY/BASELINE STUDY OF MAB AND BUPF (YEAR 1)

Current Status: Completed previously.

TASK A, ACTIVITY 3: DEVELOP STRATEGIC/ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS WITH UZPAB AND BUPF (YEAR 2)

Current Status: Completed previously.

TASK A, ACTIVITY 4: LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR UZPAB (YEAR 2)

Current Status: Completed previously.

TASK A, ACTIVITY 5: ASSOCIATION BUILDING, BOARD MANAGEMENT, AND REVENUE GENERATION AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY TRAININGS FOR MAB AND BUPF (YEAR 3)

Current Status: Ongoing. As noted during the previous report, due to poor participation in several initial MAB trainings, MAB trainings were suspended. BUPF trainings continued into the current reporting period with high rates of attendance. A total of 116 participated in the Association Building courses including 27 women counselors and a total of 198 participated in the Board Management and Financial Sustainability course including 54 women counselors. A final course will be held in Khulna Division in late July. The BUPF Secretariat Office Manager briefed participants in each course on association finances and dues collection status. While most course participants made commitments to increase dues collection in their areas, the actual increase in dues paid has been limited.

TASK A, ACTIVITY 6: DEVELOPMENT OF BUPF TRAINING CELL (YEAR 3)

Current Status: Suspended. SDLG attempted to revisit this activity after its suspension in Q1 based on USAID requests to slow down spending. Both consultants originally identified and approved for contracting were no longer interested in the assignment and were pursuing other work. In addition, due to continued questions early in Q2 about BUPF's ability to collect sufficient dues, the project team decided to suspend plans to develop a training cell and focus BUPF member efforts on financial sustainability.

2.2.1 TASK B: OPERATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

TASK B, ACTIVITY 1: DEFINE AND SUPPORT CORE OPERATIONS OF MAB AND BUPF (YEARS 1 TO 3)

Current Status: Ongoing. SDLG continues to support core operations costs (including office rent, staff salaries and supplies, and committee meeting costs) for all three associations. Support levels for BUPF and MAB decreased to the 70% level from May while younger association UzPAB continued to receive 100% support. Core operations support is scheduled to end in December 2013 for all three associations.

TASK B, ACTIVITY 2: SUPPORT UNIFIED UPAZILA PARISHAD ASSOCIATION (YEAR 1)

Current Status: Completed previously.

TASK B, ACTIVITY 3: COORDINATION COMMITTEE OF MAB/BUPF/UPAZILA ASSOCIATION (YEARS 2 AND 3)

Current Status: Suspended. As noted previously, the creation of a formalized coordination committee for all three associations is unlikely. LG association leaders continue to coordinate on an ad-hoc basis attending advocacy workshops and other public events.

TASK B, ACTIVITY 4: EFFECTIVE DUES COLLECTION AND MEMBER COMMUNICATION (YEAR 3)

Current Status: Ongoing. The three associations made modest though insufficient progress in collecting dues from potential council members during Q2. As noted above, follow up dues collection workshops were conducted for BUPF and UzPAB to review previous commitments, progress, and effective strategies for convincing councils to join associations and pay dues. At SDLG's suggestion, all three associations are moving towards more standardized and streamlined systems for dues collection that require council resolutions, provide cash receipts, and use the *bKash* and Dutch Bangla Bank systems for electronic fund transfer via mobile phone. Each Secretariat reports dues collection progress on a weekly basis and follows up with members on the status of their dues collection commitments.

Dues Collection - Results as of the June 30th end of the reporting period were as follows.

- **MAB – 41%** - While MAB continues to be the most successful collecting dues from over **130 of the 317** possible member municipalities, its collection rate has slowed sharply since Q1. MAB collects on a July – June fiscal year basis and collections for FY 2012-13 will continue next quarter along with collections for the new July 2013-June 2014 fiscal year.
- **BUPF – 8%** - Collections have doubled since the prior report but are still very low at **383 of 4547** total possible BUPF members. At SDLG urging, BUPF has adopted several strategies to communicate with UPs on dues including peer contact, appeals in newsletters, reminder SMSs from the Secretariat, and will begin distributing certificates to dues paying members. Several individual members have visited UPs to motivate them to become BUPF members. BUPF collects on a calendar year basis.
- **UzPAB – 9%** - Only **45 of 482** total possible UzPAB members had paid dues by the end of June. While the UzPAB Secretariat has adopted many of the same strategies as BUPF, the direct participation by UzPAB members in dues collection visits remains low. UzPAB collects on a calendar year basis.

Member Communications - All three associations submitted quarterly newsletters for print by the end of the reporting period using techniques and tools provided by SDLG subcontractor and communications agency UNITREND and limited editorial input from SDLG. Both electronic form and print forms of the newsletter are possible. Promotional videos have been developed for all three associations and trial websites prepared for BUPF and UzPAB as discussed under the section on Communication below. MAB will retain the website developed for it under a project funded by the Royal Danish Embassy.

TASK B, ACTIVITY 5: SUPPORT KEY ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES BY MAB, BUPF, AND UZPAB (YEARS 2 AND 3)

Current Status: Suspended. As noted in the previous report, resources for advocacy activities were eliminated from MAB and BUPF grants after the USAID request to slow down spending. Limited support continues for UzPAB events such as press conferences. MAB, BUPF and UzPAB representatives will continue to represent their members as participants in workshops organized by external organizations, and at SDLG planned advocacy events such as the small meetings with policy makers planned in Q3 and Q4 2013 under Component 1.

2.3 COMPONENT 3: TRANSPARENT AND EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY BY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES IN BRIEF

Major Achievements

This Component trains, facilitates, and mentors local government elected representatives in key processes of transparent, accountable and effective governance in 600 LGUs across Bangladesh. Citizens receive

corresponding training under Component 4 including sessions with LG officials. Training is delivered by nine local partner NGOs with past experience working with LG in their assigned areas.

Major achievements in the April 2013 to June 2013 reporting period were:

- **First Round ABC Grading of 500 LGUs Completed** – Early in 2013, SDLG initiated a review process of all 500 LGUs assigning grades of A, B, C for excellent, satisfactory, and poor performance. The grading process follows a set criteria assessing the practice of key governance processes such as tax assessment, citizen ward meetings, standing committee meetings, and others that were taught during SDLG trainings. Those receiving an ‘A’ grade are correctly practicing these key processes and expected to continue them without SDLG PNGO assistance. Future rounds are planned.
- **49% of Upazila Parishad Trainings Completed** – As of June 30, 49 of 100 upazila councils in the SDLG project area had been trained. The three-day training combines financial management, participatory planning and budgeting, and service delivery and monitoring into one session focusing on the authorities provided in the 2009 law. All elected members of the upazila councils – Chairs, Vice Chairs, and Mayors and UP Chairs – are trained together, a challenge for implementers as discussed below.

Major Challenges

Challenges during the subject reporting period included the following:

- **Reluctance of Upazila Council Chairs to Attend Trainings** – PNGOs reported having to reschedule some upazila council trainings multiple times to ensure the presence of the upazila chair. A number of upazila chairs initially refused to participate in training sessions or failed to attend despite commitments to do so. Objections included being trained together with UP chairs and mayors of perceived lower status or receiving the same lodging and transport arrangements. Given sufficient time and support from SDLG staff, PNGOs were able to overcome these objections in all but one case thus far.
- **Hartals Continue to Delay Trainings** – While *hartals* or transport and work stoppages were fewer in the April to June period than earlier in the year, these still contributed to cancellations, postponements and rescheduling of trainings and slowed activity progress especially early in the reporting period.

ACHIEVEMENTS BY WORK PLAN TASK AREAS

2.3.1 TASK A: TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

TASK A, ACTIVITY 1: LGU CLUSTER SITE SELECTION (YEAR 1)

Current Status: Completed previously. A series of map files detailing project work areas is available online at www.sdlg-bangladesh.com under Project Area.

TASK A, ACTIVITY 2: BASELINE STUDY OF LGUS (YEAR 1)

Current Status: Completed previously.

TASK A, ACTIVITY 3: DEVELOP TRAINING MATERIALS WITH NGO PARTNERS (YEAR 1)

Current Status: Completed previously.

TASK A, ACTIVITY 4: TRAINING-OF-TRAINERS WITH NGO PARTNERS (YEARS 1 AND 2)

Current Status: Completed previously.

TASK A, ACTIVITY 5: CLUSTER RECEPTION MEETINGS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS IN COLLABORATION WITH PARTNER NGOS, MAB AND BUPF (YEAR 2)

Current Status: Completed previously.

TASK A, ACTIVITY 6: TRAININGS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS (YEARS 2 AND 3)

Current Status: Completed.

TASK A, ACTIVITY 7: LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAPACITY INDEX – LGCI (YEARS 1 TO 3)

Current Status: Years 1 and 2 Completed. Year 3 Pending.

TASK A, ACTIVITY 8: TRAINING OF 100 UPAZILA COUNCILS (YEAR 3)

Current Status: Ongoing. As noted, as of June 30, 49 upazila councils had received training from senior PNGO staff members with the assistance of SDLG regional office staff. Trainings continue to show a widespread lack of knowledge of the law and tensions between Upazila Chairs and Vice Chairs; as well as between Upazila Chairs and the many UP Chairs and Mayors. Since the lack of knowledge of the law or lack of commitment to full council participation by Upazila Chairs is a deterrent to council operations, their participation is essential. While it is still too early to assess training results, in at least a few upazilas receiving SDLG training, the full upazila council has met, reviewed budgets and for the first time taken steps to form upazila standing committees as per law.

TASK A, ACTIVITY 7: REFRESHER TRAINING AND MENTORING OF 500 UNION AND MUNICIPAL COUNCILS; FOLLOWUP ACTIVITIES (YEARS 2 AND 3)

Current Status: Ongoing. Partner NGO project officers continued to focus on informal facilitation and mentoring efforts at the LGU level to ensure the February to May planning and budgeting cycle was completed observing mandated processes and with proper citizen participation. At the same time, PNGO officers have assessed each of the 500 LGUs trained against set criteria to produce A B and C ratings. The ratings and assessment formats will also serve to identify specific weaknesses in each LGU that require further mentoring support, and which LGUs are likely to be able to sustain good governance practices after project close. Future rounds of A B C rating are planned to measure progress.

As of June 30, A B C ratings for the 500 LGUs were as follows:

- **A Grade – 20.4%**
- **B Grade – 60.2%**
- **C Grade – 19.4%**

2.4 COMPONENT 4: CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL DECISION-MAKING

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES IN BRIEF

Major Achievements

Major achievements under this Component are similar to those under Component 3 as both components are being implemented in parallel. As members of Citizen-in-Governance (CiG) forums, citizens are trained together with LG officials in Component 3 trainings and receive other ‘citizen-only’ technical assistance.

- **Citizen Folk Dramas Completed in 42% of 500 LGUs** – Folk dramas showing the proper functioning of local councils and citizen roles in decision making were performed in 42% or 210 unions or

paurashavas by June 30. While the number of LGUs to receive this training had been reduced from 500 to 250 earlier in 2013 after USAID instructions to reduce spending, *with the receipt of an additional \$1.3 million in funding*, drama training is now planned for all 500 LGUs. Partner NGO provides training to local citizens often including councilors to stage the drama. The citizen group is encouraged to repeat the drama in other areas after the initial performance.

- **CiG Members Participation in Ward Meetings, and Open Budget Sessions Continues** – As in the previous period, CiG members continued to be active in various council functions as allowed by law. Ward meetings in all wards and open budget meetings for each council had been held in almost all of SDLG’s 500 LGUs by the end of the reporting period. Tax fairs, an optional event initiated by councils themselves, had been held in many LGUs.

Major Challenges

Challenges in this Component are the same as those under Component 3. Both activities are implemented by partner NGO project officers with their work disrupted due to hartals.

ACHIEVEMENTS BY WORK PLAN TASK AREAS

2.4.1 TASK A: DEVELOPING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION FORUMS

TASK A, ACTIVITY 1: DEVELOP TRAINING MATERIALS WITH NGO PARTNERS (YEAR 1)

Current Status: Completed previously.

TASK A, ACTIVITY 2: ESTABLISH AND SUPPORT CITIZEN PARTICIPATION FORUMS (YEAR 2)

Current Status: Completed previously.

2.4.2 TASK B: TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (PREVIOUSLY PARTICIPATORY STRATEGIC PLANNING)

TASK A, ACTIVITY 3: REFRESHER TRAINING, PARTICIPATORY PLANNING AND BUDGETING FOR CITIZENS GROUPS IN 500 UNION AND MUNICIPAL COUNCILS (YEARS 2 AND 3)

Current Status: Ongoing. As discussed under Task A, Activity 7 for Component 3, PNGO staff are delivering informal facilitation and mentoring to LGUs rather than formal refresher trainings. This includes a special emphasis on CiG members whose continued active involvement is essential to ensure the continuation of democratic processes in the immediate post-project period and beyond.

2.5 COMPONENT 5: WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY

Current Status: Ongoing. Two Windows of Opportunity activities have received concurrence from the USAID COR.

- Strengthening LG Ministry audit and monitoring functions (grant)
- Activation of women’s leadership in LG standing committee activities (grants)

The first activity was completed in February 2013 and the second activity was initiated in October 2012 and is ongoing.

COMPONENT 5, ACTIVITY 1: FRIENDS OF SDLG GROUP (YEAR 1)

Current Status: Completed previously.

COMPONENT 5, ACTIVITY 2: RAPID RESPONSE CAPACITY (YEAR 1)

Current Status: Completed previously.

COMPONENT 5, ACTIVITY 3: LG AUDIT AND ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS (YEARS 2 AND 3)

Current Status: Completed previously.

COMPONENT 5, ACTIVITY 4: WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LG STANDING COMMITTEES (YEARS 2 AND 3)

Current Status: Ongoing. This activity supplements and deepens work by SDLG's nine lead field training partner NGOs with Standing Committees in 500 LGUs. Under Bangladesh law, unions and paurashavas must establish committees dedicated to sectoral areas such as health, education, agriculture, women and children's issues, as well as LGU operations such as finance, audit and accounts, etc. In most cases these committees exist only on paper.

In the April to June period, the four women-headed NGOs grantees continued training of three selected committees in each assigned LGU in how to monitor and report on the performance of services provided by central government line ministries within their unions or paurashavas; or understand and review LGU budgets and accounting of income and expenditures.

In most cases, the three selected standing committees are headed by women and include Health, Education and Family Planning; Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock, Women and Child Welfare, and Financial Management/Audit and Accounts. Achievements in the reporting period included:

- **82% of Selected Standing Committees Headed by Women** – In the 1500 standing committees being targeted for assistance, PNGOs were successful in supporting the selection of women councilors as committee heads in the large majority.
- **96% Completion of Training in Service Monitoring** – PNGOs had completed one-day trainings for almost all of the targeted standing committees by June 30, the first step in the field activation process. Monitoring trainings focused on utilization of five different checklist formats for primary schools, health clinics, agricultural services, women and children welfare, and finance and accounts developed in the previous reporting period.
- **Progress on training on reporting and monitoring visits** – In about a fifth (23%) of the 500 LGUs, training on reporting of monitoring results to union councils and UDCC meetings had been delivered and in about a third (34%) of LGUs standing committee members had conducted the first round of service monitoring.

Service monitoring is to be conducted each quarter with results reported at monthly meetings of the union council and bimonthly meetings of the UDCC where junior field officers from service providing ministries attend. If this reporting does not result in improved services, LGU chairs and mayors would elevate the issues identified and raise at the monthly upazila council meetings where senior upazila-level field officers from ministries are present.

3.0 COMMUNICATIONS

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES IN BRIEF

Overall SDLG communications strategy is research-driven, designed to support project results and tied to specific PMP indicators, and organized around *Three Themes*:

1. **Media training and capacity building** activities to educate journalists and other media personnel in local governance issues and encourage insightful and engaging coverage.
2. **Local government association and citizen participation** activities to improve LG associations' ability to communicate with their members building loyalty and support and to advocate successfully for policy reform with the central government.
3. **Advertising and promotion campaign** activities to spur citizen participation through production of innovative IEC materials and support promotion of institutions such as the LG associations.

Under subcontract included in the original proposal to USAID, US – based specialty communications firm **HDI** (Howard Delafield International) is providing overall strategy design, research and technical assistance. *Theme One* activities are being implemented by local grantee **MPG** (Media Professionals Group) while activities under *Themes Two and Three* have been merged together for implementation by local subcontractor **UNITREND**.

Broadly speaking, all communications activities contribute to one of three project objectives:

1. **Improving Citizen Participation** in Local Governance (supporting Components 3 and 4)
2. **Strengthening LGAs** or Local Government Associations (supporting Component 2)
3. **Improving Media Coverage** of Local Governance (supporting all Components)

With the receipt of an additional \$1.3 million in funding, several but not all of the activities planned were revived, including some initiated or completed in the April to June reporting period.

Major Achievements

THEME 1: Media Training and Capacity Building

In the April – June reporting period, the Media Professionals Group (MPG) completed the following deliverables:

Strengthening LGAs

- **Media Roundtable:** Grantee MPG in collaboration with the national daily Samakal organized a media roundtable '**Path to Empowerment of Women in Local Government in Bangladesh: With Women, by Women**' on the legal provisions and discrepancies regarding women representation in local elected councils. With local government experts, government officials, policy makers, local government association leaders, women NGO directors, media and other key stakeholders participating, the meeting focused on decision making and financial authority of women leaders and their rightful place in different local government councils and committees.

- **Local Government TV Talk Show Series:** A 12-episode TV talk show series was produced and broadcast from May 20 to May 31, 2013 as part of the 6:30pm news hour on a popular private TV channel, Somoy TV. While a recently established channel, Somoy has developed a reputation for relatively informative and objective news presentation. Talk show discussants included local government experts and public representatives from all three tiers of local government. Talk show themes featured participatory planning and budgeting, delivery of services, women's representation, and the broad decentralization issues involving unions, municipalities and upazilas.

Improving Citizen Participation

- **LG Online Website:** MPG has developed a one-stop portal of local government information, the *LG Online Clearinghouse* at www.lgbd.org. This will serve as a resource for LG related news, analysis and information. The site will contain features, articles, important links and an archive of local government news. Information includes details on the corresponding LG ministry; organograms, functions, laws and a database of all tiers of local government in Bangladesh; website hosting for LG associations in Bangladesh; data on LG elections and links to LG publications; and summaries on local government structures in SAARC, ASEAN and other countries.
- **Social Media Capacity Building for Community Engagement:** A large group of youth was engaged to share write-ups on key local government issues using the most popular and largest social media platform, *Facebook*. The group of mostly university students shared their understanding and knowledge on different questions raised on local government in a six phase competition. The five best performers in this competition were awarded a 3-month, hands-on training in local government journalism by MPG. They are expected to raise LG issues at different levels and increase awareness of LG capacities among youth.

THEMES 2 and 3: LG Association and Citizen Participation/Advertising and Promotion Campaign

Local subcontractor **UNITREND** completed the following deliverables during the reporting period:

Strengthening LGAs

- **Promotional Videos for Three LG Associations:** Initial versions of three promotional documentaries were produced for SDLG supported local government associations BUPF, MAB, and UzPAB. The 10-minute documentaries featured the activities, vision, mission, salient features, future plans of each association through a series of interviews with key office holders, general association members and key stakeholders. The films are expected to help associations in building membership and visibility and will be finalized early in the next reporting period.

Improving Citizen Participation

- **Radio Spots:** Two radio PSAs (public service announcements) on SDLG campaign theme and on the avenues for citizen participation in local decision making were produced. The two PSAs will be aired on the state owned radio channel, Bangladesh Betar, in the October to December period reminding citizens to participate in ward meetings, open budget meetings and engage in local decision making.

Improving Media Coverage

- **SDLG Campaign and Success Stories Published:** Print news and feature stories based on different SDLG success stories were published in Rajshahi, Khulna and Barisal based local news papers as well as national dailies.

With the receipt of an additional \$1.3 million in funding, the following activities were revived after consultation with the USN subcontractor and strategic consultant HDI and local partner UNITREND.

- **PSA (TV/Radio) Airing:** TV spots developed on ‘we are government’, ‘citizen participation’, and ‘women leadership’ themes will be aired on satellite channels and national TV channel BTV during the October to December period. The timing will coincide with the airing of radio spots on the first two themes on Bangladesh Betar within the same frequency.
- **Citizen's Reporting - Youth (Video Blogs, “Eye/I Reports”):** To encourage citizen journalism among youth, a month long, internet-based training and competition will be organized from October to November to be followed by a national workshop for the best performers with an international expert.
- **Women's Hour Radio Program:** A 12-episode weekly radio program by and for women will be produced and aired featuring women representatives speaking on the key topics from their perspective.
- **Documentation of SDLG Communications:** A pictorial brief on SDLG successes and communication interventions will be developed by the end of the project.

Major Challenges

Apart from series of strikes and political unrest which hampered the implementation of some programs, there were no other major challenges.

4.0 MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E)

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES IN BRIEF

One M&E activity was completed during the reporting period.

Major Achievements

- **Midline Survey Report Submitted** – From December 2012 – January 2013 field work for a midline survey was conducted to assess the impact of SDLG’s work in the previous year. Drawing on data sets from the baseline and midline surveys, a midline survey report was prepared by an international consultant with a strong background in statistical analysis. The full report was submitted to the USAID COR in May 2013.
- **Update to GIS Online Map Completed Showing Significant Progress** – SDLG regional staff and partner NGOs continue to monitor LGU progress on 18 ‘outcomes’ or results of 2012 and 2013 trainings and collect data on these results from each of the 500 LGUs. GIS data for the quarter shows significant progress on results measures. SDLG has submitted the full compiled data set to GIS experts at the Tetra Tech ARD home office and an updated online map showing results till June 30 for most of the 500 LGUs is expected to be available in the next reporting period.

The SDLG GIS map draft is located at <http://bit.ly/16tqYVC>

Major Challenges

There were no major challenges during the reporting period.