

Improving ICT Literacy through Participatory Approach: A Study on Human Capital Development Projects under LGSP in Bangladesh

¹S. M. Mehedi Hasan, ²Md. Siddiquir Rahman, ³Md. Mizanur Rahman, ⁴Mohammad Mamun and ⁵Dr. Md. Moshir Rahman

Abstract

Encouraging participation through local governments has been questionable and democratic spirit with direct participation of common people has always been poorly valued. The Union Parishads, in spite of having constitutional provision, could not come out as self governing units and left under the command of national government. The objectives of this study was to assess how participation makes LGSP effective in improving ICT literacy in rural areas of Bangladesh and to identify how LGSP plays pivotal role to build capacity of students and unemployed people of the study area. Both qualitative and quantitative methods and standardized statistical application SPSS were used in the study. The study was based on empirical data from eight (08) Unions of Kishoreganj Upazila of Nilphamari District. The study reveals that the projects under LGSP are usually taken after consultation with the rural people through Ward Meeting. However, the number of ICT related projects were very low ; only 2 to 3 projects were taken by each of the union council in a fiscal year. Most of the projects under LGSP were on construction of road and culverts, installing tube-well, developing rural drainage and renovation of sewerage system because the elected representatives are interested on such types of small projects. On the other hand, the role of LGSP in building capacity of the unemployed youths and students was found to be very noteworthy as they received different digital services and skill oriented training ranging from online job application, photocopying, printing, registration and other e- services ; creating a new job opportunities and self run businesses. Therefore, this study recommended to take more ICT and other skill oriented projects and to increase budget for advanced level ICT training for rural youths; which may contribute to developing freelancing and entrepreneurship amongst them. This study will create value to the research arena and the implementing agencies will think out the box while giving effort on capacity development through LGSP.

¹ S Director, Bangladesh Public Administration Training centre, Savar, Dhaka.

² Director, Bangladesh Public Administration Training centre, Savar, Dhaka.

³ Research Officer, Bangladesh Public Administration Training centre, Savar, Dhaka.

⁴ Senior Research Officer, Bangladesh Public Administration Training centre, Savar, Dhaka

⁵ Deputy Director, Bangladesh Public Administration Training centre, Savar, Dhaka

Key Words: *Local Government, LGSP, ICT Training, ICT Literacy, Participation, Capacity Development*

Introduction

The Local government in Bangladesh has a long historical origin and a strong constitutional framework since the constitution emphasis on empowering Local Government (Aminuzzaman, 2010). According to the constitution Bangladesh, the state continues its efforts to ensure the effective participation of the people through elected representatives at all levels of administration. Thus, one of the main focuses of the government was to transform the Union parishad (UP) into a strong and effective service organization in terms of financial and decision making through involving local people. Hence, the local government initiated Local Governance Support Project (LGSP) in 2006 after the successful of pilot project which was implemented in 2000. Under this project, all the Union Parishads of the country are being allotted directly and development projects (schemes) are being adopted and implemented consistent with their priorities through direct participation of the local people at ward level for empowering people.

Bangladesh has introduced the use of information and communication technology (ICT) at the rural level to provide quicker and smoother services to the people. Thus, ICT literacy comes to the forefront as an integral part of the government recent initiatives, under the purview of Human Capital Development Projects of LGSP, to support the local governance system and decentralization. However, the goal of people's participation in development activities had never been achieved (Khan, 2009 and Rahman,1995).

Statement of the Problem

Though the Constitution of Bangladesh (1972) gives emphasis on forming local government with a spirit of delegation and devolution; yet, people's participation in rural local government had rarely been maintained reasonably though 72 percent population live in rural areas (WB, 2012). The level and eminence of people's participation have also been uneven (UNESCAP⁶ Country Paper: 2012). Development partners like World Bank and UNDP suggested devolution of decision making,

⁶United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

development planning and involving marginalized people through participatory approaches (Obaidullah, 2009). Still the UPs could not come out as 'self-governing' units and left under the command of national government (Khan, 2000:109) since there has been a central control over decision making particularly by the Member of Parliament, bureaucrats and local elite (Hasan, 2013).

Since inception, LGSP has been playing an important role to run rural LGs in Bangladesh by implementing small projects because participation in decision-making process can promote and encourage local beneficiaries in local development projects (Mohammad, 2010). However, it is evident that the local involvement is not ensured properly. Further, enough data are not available in the literature on this issue. To enrich the data bank on the effectiveness of LGSP, this study was conducted and it will contribute to the policy research of the country.

Objectives of the Study

- To assess how participation make LGSP effective in improving ICT literacy in rural areas of Bangladesh
- To identify how LGSP plays role to build capacity of students and unemployed people of the study area.

Rationale of the study

In most of the cases, the politics has been conserved only for the small groups of harmonized elites having common power-structure, culture, and ethos who interact socially and intermarry (Kochanet 2000:547 ; cited in Hasan, 2013). Yet, over the past two decades, significant socioeconomic changes have been noticeable due to educational development and ease of access to print and electronic media.

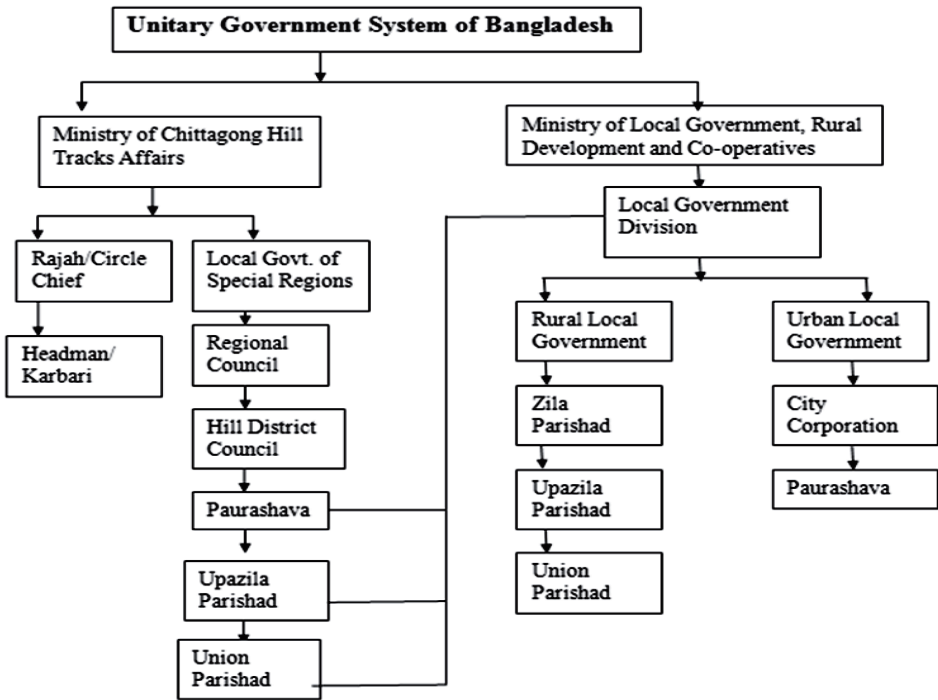
Therefore, a study on a unique dimension of selecting human capital development projects by Union Parishad under LGSP will be of impressive implication not only for the development practitioners but also the national policy makers since we will come to know the latest scenario of development management of LGs. Furthermore, it can of immense use for the policy makers to recognize the loopholes, if any, in the current development process and, resultantly, assist them to make changes in the policies in future.

Scope of the Study

The micro projects under LGSP are supposed to ensure mass participation in priority setting and supervision of services at the local level. This study assessed the scope of participation of community people, local elites, direct and indirect beneficiaries, UP members and government officials in selecting human capital development projects under LGSP. It further explored the effectiveness of projects taken for improving ICT literacy among poor unemployed youths.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Since independence, Bangladesh believes on power of people as well as exercises democracy in every stage of the government. According to the Constitution, Bangladesh is a unitary, independent and sovereign republic (GoB, 2020a). On the other hand, based on the relationships between the legislature and the executive, Bangladesh follows the Parliamentary government system (Figure-2.1).



Sources: Adopted and Modified from Barkat et al. (2015); Ahmed (1997); Ahmed and Ali (1995)

Figure 2.1: Local Government System of Bangladesh

Though the country is a unitary state the constitution emphasizes on local government institution composed of elected representatives (GoB, 2020a) and local governments are supposed to manage local affairs and development. Although some powers are decentralized to local government, yet in the actual case, the local government is dependent on the central government for various reasons especially for financial matters (Jahan, 2006).

There are two-types of government system existing in Bangladesh in the sub-national level such as (i). Local government bodies who are elected and (ii). Filed administration who are appoint by the central government. The Local government can be divided into two categories such as urban local government and rural local government. City Corporation in the big cities and municipalities in the small city or town are under the realm of urban local government, whereas rural local government has three tires such as Zila Parishad (District Council) in the district level, Upazila Parishad in the sub-district level and the Union Parishad in the Union level (Union consists of more than one villages).

UP is the oldest tier of Local government in the country and has a long history of evolving over the period of time to take the present structure, responsibilities and name such as Chowkidari Panchayet system in 870, Union Committee in 1884 -85 (villagers get the opportunity to elect their representatives) and this democratic process, still remains unchanged in the UPs (GoB, 2020b).

Since UP is the grass-roots level local government institution, the government has taken initiatives to ensure transparency and accountability throughout the country and hence, the LGSP has been introduced in the UP level to provide financial support through Basic Block Grant (an annual sum of money that is awarded by the government to local government body to assist a specific project or program) and performance based grant along with Capacity building support to the UPs for increasing their performance (GoB, 2020c). The project was initiated as LGSP-1 in July 2006 and almost 97% of UPs were covered in 2011 under the First Phase. Each year the UPs are audited, and having clean audit, receive an expanded block grant named performance block grant (PBG). The LGSP is the first project of its kind in Bangladesh that supported systemic, country-wide reforms in the system of local governance (Ahmed, 2010). Thus UPs were brought under LGSP to

improve financial, institutional and technical efficiency, undergoing a remarkable development under LGSP-I and LGSP-2. Consequently, LGSP-3 was implemented under Local Government Division from December 2017 to 2021, financially supported by the GoB and World Bank (GoB, 2020c).

Elected members of UPs are responsive to the demand of communities and UPs are becoming the focal point for development activities of the local communities (Ahmed, 2010). Though this study emphasized on the participatory approach under LGSP; the said study did not cover the existing ICT capacity of the UPs and how LGSP contribute to improving ICT literacy in the rural areas. This study aims to focus these areas. Different Policy Documents such as PRSP emphasized on local government bodies so that people participation can be ensured for establishing accountable and responsive government (Aminuzzaman, 2010); since LGs were identified as key strategic elements for good governance and development of the country.

Thus the UPs are being trusted to have discretionary funds, LGSP, directly to their accounts and are being subjected to audit through which their performance is measured. Even the behavior of the communities and UPs get changed as LGSP offers opportunity for participatory budgeting, scheme formulation and implementation. In addition, they cordially welcome proper auditing, particularly by the private sector auditors and firms. (Ahmed, 2010). This project also creates the employment opportunity among the rural women and unemployed educated youth through providing fund and infrastructure development. On the other hand, the present study was carried out in one of the poorest Upzilas of the country and the goal was to explore on how LGSP plays role to build capacity of students and unemployed people which was not looked under the mentioned studies. Substantial studies found that, because of LGSP, the coordination of UPs were better and elected representatives come to their office regularly and people get better service. The present study emphasized on how the LGSP projects were effective in terms of improving ICT literacy and increasing employability in the study area.

Biback (2020) found that significant impact of Union Digital Center (UDC) for providing important services to the local communities such as registering birth certificate and death certificate, submitting passport

application, informing various admission/jobs results, collecting land records etc. The study mentioned that UDCs reduce the cost and time of the local people to get their necessary services and meet the need of the local people through using ICT; which is also a goal of the present government and cover the very first objective of the present study. However, the study used quantitative approach and the area of the said study was Sylhet Sadar Upzila. On the contrary, the present study applied mixed method mostly depending on qualitative approach and the study area was one of the poorest northern districts of the country .

This study further focused on people participation in the decision making process denoting the full involvement of the common people during the project selection process, especially, ICT related projects under LGSP through Ward Meetings.

However, there are different barriers for ensuring peoples' participation in the project selection and implementation stages such as cultural element of individual which ultimately affect the organizational culture (Alink & Kommer, 2011). The political attitude of ruling government is very important to ensure mass participation in the LGs (Noor, 1986) and because of their lack of good will including local administration; local people lose their confidence on local bodies. This is why the LGs have been seen to have rise and fall based on different political regime (Siddiqui, 1994). Yet, attempt was taken to function the local bodies so that people can get the best result from it (Jahan,1997); as people are unable to extract the best result because of low or ineffective participation by the local communities in the process of decision making and implementation (Hasan, 2013).

Nevertheless, the essence of the constitution is to empower the local bodies so that they can take part in the decision making process for solving their local problem through participatory approach. But the history of local government of Bangladesh indicates that elected and political government made some reforms in the structure of local government bodies based on the guidelines from develop partners through which some sorts of decentralization was made in the decision making process empowering the LGs so that it can enjoy and ensure people participation at the grass root level (Aminuzzaman, 2010 and Hasan, 2013) through LGSP. During the project selection stage under LGSP, local people suggest the UPs functionaries to take appropriate

project to address their problems and needs (Hasan, 2013). Unfortunately, because of the existing organizational culture and lack of commitment, LGs yet to become self governing units (Khan, 2000).

The author also mentioned that since the UP functionaries use huge amount of money during the election, therefore it is not unreliable that they try to get back their money from different activities and projects. Even though, the author also stated, during planning stage it is possible to ensure participatory process by the local people. However, the said study was focused on Infrastructure project under LGSP whereas current study focused on ICT.

The predecessor of the LGSP is the Sirajganj Local Governance Development Fund Project (SLGDFP) and the goal of SLGDFP was to enhance the performance and capabilities, intuitional, of the local government bodies especially of the Ups (Aminuzzaman, 2010) .

Based on the significant positive result, donor countries and agencies such as JICA, DANIDA, etc. increased their support for strengthening local governance. The World Bank, in 2006, initiated the LGSP projects (US\$91.63 million) which was the first nationwide project to establish a strong Local government system (World Bank, 2017). Local Government Institutions (LGIs) such as UPs have crucial roles for ensuring good governance and rural development, and envisioning decentralization in terms of political power and fiscal authority in the long term in the country (GoB, 2015e).

On the other hand, the Local Government Division carried out a number of pilot projects for ensuring dynamic and functional LGs in the lowest tier through community participation (GoB, 2016d). Based on the positive result of SLGDFP and other projects, LGSP was implemented under the direct funding of the World Bank, UNCDF, UNDP, DANIDA and EU. Therefore, LGSP has strengthened the accountability of local governance system providing services that meet community priorities, supported by an efficient and transparent fiscal system. Consequently, LGSP-3 had been designed with all UPs and few selected Pourashavas in Bangladesh. The main objective of the project was to institutionalize accountable and transparent system of transfer resources to the UPs and Pourahavas directly to their bank account and also established Block Grants system (GoB, 2016d).

The LGSP, since its inception, has been successful to reduce significant amount of the misappropriation and mismanagement of government fund allotted for the UPs and open the window for decentralization, (GoB and UNDP Project Document, 2006 cited in Hasan, 2013).

Hasan (2013) puts forth that LGSP has contributed in practicing democratic manner in the grass roots level through establishing accountable, participatory, and effective local governance; since the project introduced performance criteria and minimum condition for getting block grants for the concerned UP together with demonstration mechanism. For the purpose of transparency, accountability and proper implementation of projects, there are provision of some Committees in the UP Operational Manual under LGSP such as Word Committer, Scheme Supervision Committee and Tender Evaluation Committee etc. Their sole responsibility is to ensure proper implementation and monitoring of projects taken under LGSP-3 so that local people can get the benefit of it (GoB, 2018f) ; making the UPs the epi-centres for all activities for implementing projects from planning to monitoring .

All the projects, under LGSP, are to be taken based on the feedback from local people through Ward Committee and there will be representatives from Teachers, Civil Society, NGOs, Freedom Fighters, and Women etc. which ensure the transparency and accountability of the project along with people participation and their demands (GoB, 2018f). In the word meeting, the local people get the opportunity to provide their opinion and demand freely and spontaneously and there is a provision to call Ward Meeting at least twice in a year. Even, they can monitor the purchasing activities under the projects and assist auditor through providing relevant bill voucher for ensuring proper auditing. Therefore, a study on a unique dimension of selecting human capital development projects by UP under LGSP will be of impressive implication not only for the development practitioners but also the national policy makers. With the help of its result and wide-ranging analysis, we will come to know the latest scenario of development management of LGs of Bangladesh which is very much importance for the policy makers for formulating appropriate policies related to local government bodies since one of the objectives of the present study was to assess the level of participation in making LGSP effective in improving ICT literacy in rural areas of Bangladesh. It further explored the effectiveness of projects taken for improving ICT literacy among poor unemployed youths.

3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Since the study mainly used qualitative method to address the objectives of the research, quantitative method was also applied. Thus, nature of the study was explorative which followed a scientific approach for addressing the research questions of the present study (Harvey 1969). The relevant data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Four types of questionnaires were developed for collecting data from the field through a questionnaire survey. The respondents of the questionnaires are Entrepreneur, Member of the local civil society, Local elected representative from UP and beneficiaries of the LGSP. The nature of the questionnaires was structured. On the other hand, four FGDs were carried out to collect qualitative data from the above mentioned respondents. To collect the primary data eight unions of Kishoreganj, Nilphamari, a northern poverty-stricken district of Bangladesh were selected purposively. All the elected representatives of UPs of selected unions, beneficiaries, and entrepreneurs along with members of civil society were considered as the population of the present study. For the purpose of collecting data from secondary sources, different government and non-government reports, books, journals, and other materials were consulted. For analyzing the collected data through structured questionnaires and FGDs, standardized statistical applications SPSS was administered.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Gender Distribution of the Respondents

The following figures (Figure-1 and Figure-2) describe the percentage of male and female respondents including their occupations:

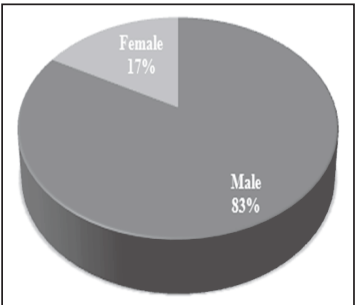


Figure 4.1: Gender distribution of the respondents

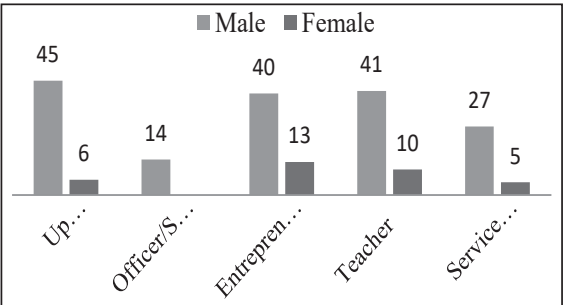


Figure 4.2: Occupation wise gender distribution

4.2 Occupation Wise Distribution of the Respondents

Occupation of the respondents can be seen from the following figure:

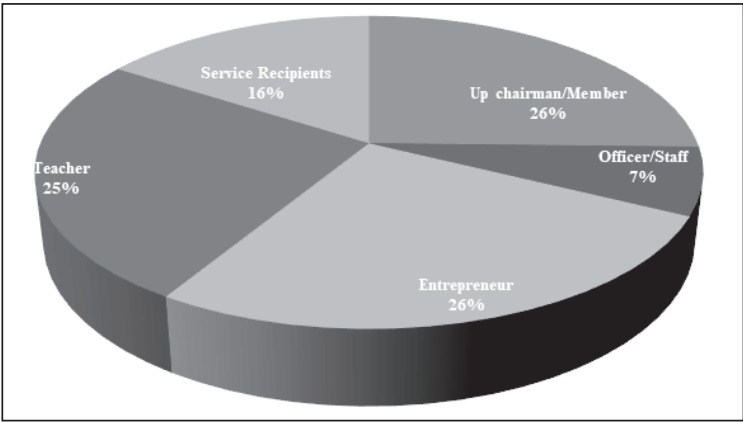


Figure 4.3: Occupation wise distribution of the respondents

4.3 Level of Education and Age of the Respondents

The figures (4.4 and 4.5) show level of education and age of the respondents.

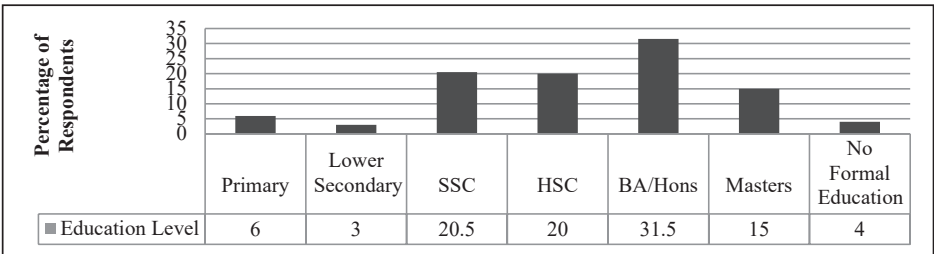


Figure 4.4: Level of Education of the respondents

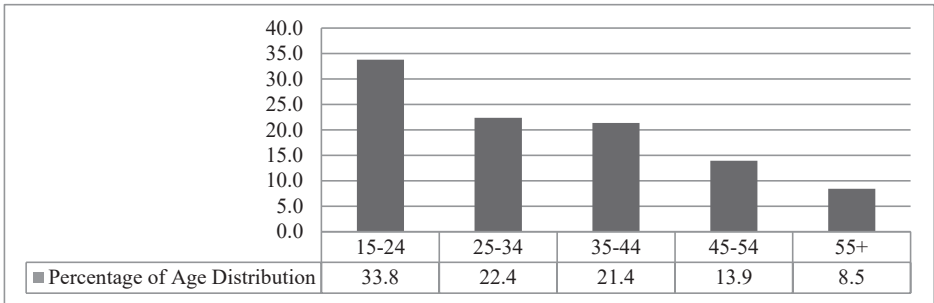


Figure 4.5: Age distribution of the respondents

4.4 Peoples’aquantance with UDC

The respondents were asked about the present condition of the UDCs and the result shows in figure 4.6. Majority of the respondents (59%) answered positively regarding the existence of UDCs in the union parishad while 40% did not answer.

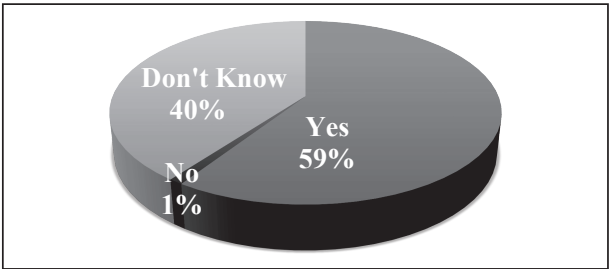


Figure 4.6: People’s awareness about UDC

4.5 Service at the UDC

Union digital centres provide a wide range of digital services to the rural people ranging from online job application to photocopy & printing service (detail description can be seen in figure 4.7). The following data show us how busy the union digital centres are.

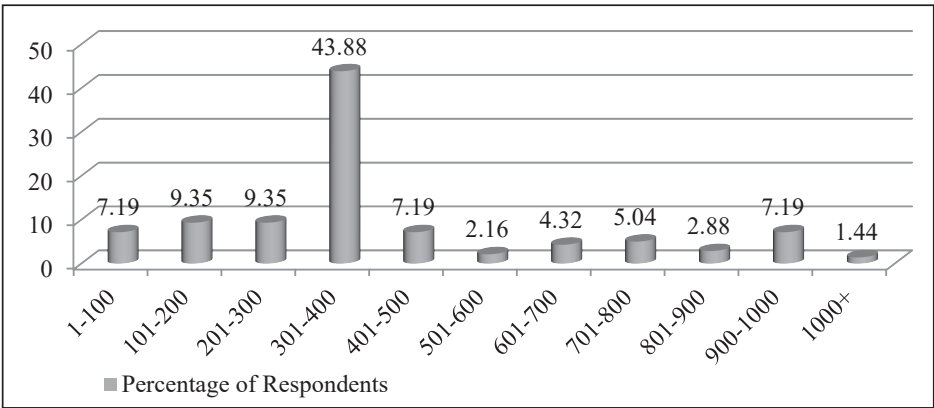


Figure 4.7: Service recipients from UDCs monthly

4.6 Training provided at UDCs

The respondents were asked how many people on average come to UDCs to take training per month. Out of 201 respondents 120 answered this question, while others said they do not know or they can not say exactly. It was seen that on average 93 persons visit UDCs for training purposes.

Table 4.1: Training provided by UDCs yearly

Frequency group (No. of trainees)	Number of responses	Percentage
1-50	30	25%
51-100	74	62%
101-150	10	8%
151-200	6	5%
Total	120	100%

4.7 Projects taken to improve UDC under LGSP in last 3 years

In case of responding this question, only elected representatives and concerned UP officials were chosen as respondents and the result can be seen in figure 4.8.

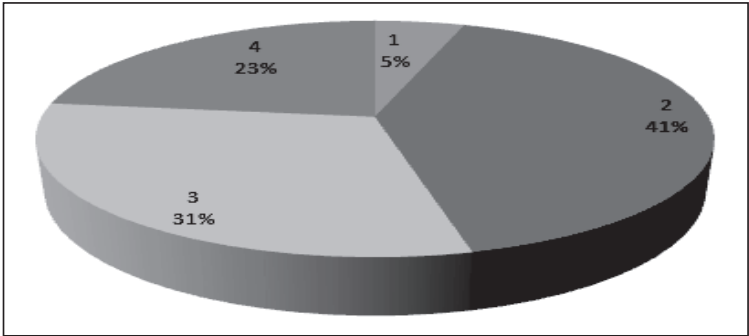


Figure 4.8: Number of Projects taken under LGSP to improve UDCs

4.8 Computer/computer lab in the UP outside UDC

Among 149 respondents, 80%, agreed that there is no computer lab outside their UDCs while only 20% claimed to have computer lab besides UDCs.

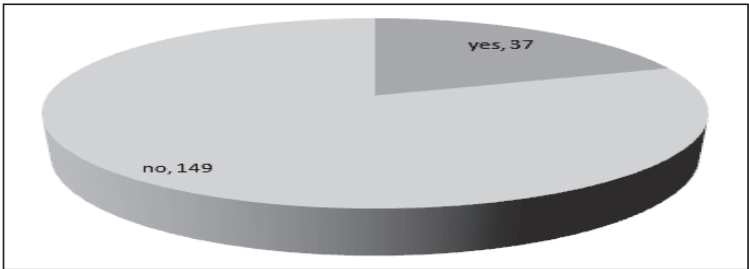


Figure 4.9: Computer outside UDC

4.9 Number of projects taken under LGSP fund in the last three years

The study tried to understand how many projects were taken under LGSP in last three years (2016-2017 to 2018-2019) and the following table (4.2) shows in detail.

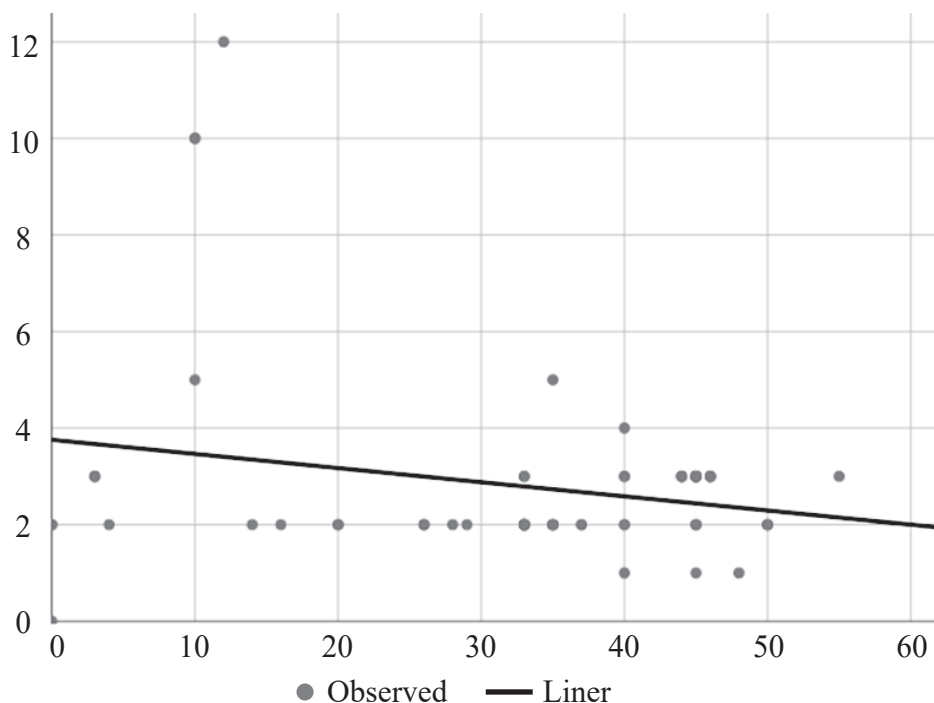
Table 4.2: Projects taken under LGSP in three years

No. of projects under LGSP	No. of Respondents
2	1
3	1
4	1
10	2
12	1
14	1
16	1
20	1
32	18
33	5
35	2
37	2
40	1
45	8
46	3
48	1
50	1
55	1
Total	51

4.10 Number of ICT related projects versus total projects under LGSP

In three years under study, each UP has taken a numbers of projects under the LGSP whereas tendency of taking ICT related projects was fewer in number within the same time frame [**correlation 1: -0.232 on 99% confidence level**]. The finding shows that elected representatives have a tendency to take different projects other than ICT related projects. The following figure shows the comparison between ICT related projects and other projects under LGSP.

How many ICT related projects taken in this union under LGSP?



How many projects were taken under LGSP in last 3 years?

Figure 4.10: Comparison between ICT related and other projects under LGSP

4.11 Demand for ICT Training Courses by the Respondents

Being asked about the necessity of ICT training, 98% of respondents replied positively which is evident in the following figure.

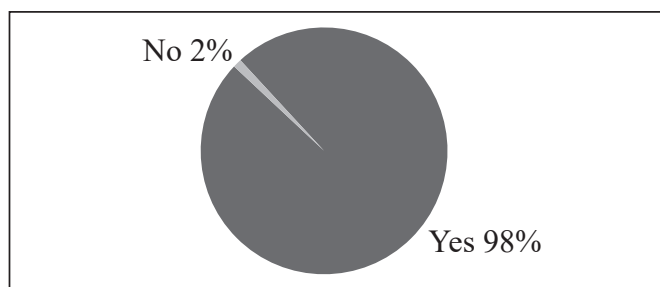


Figure 4.11: Demand for ICT Training

4.12 Allocation of resources for ICT Training

The following figure explains the opinon of respondants related to expenditure on ICT Training.

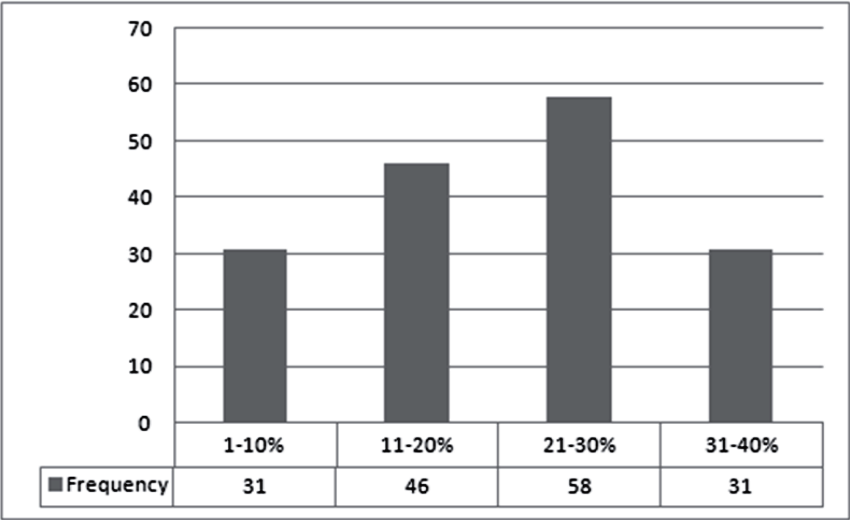


Figure 4.12: Spending on ICT training Under LGSP

4.13 ICT related projects taken in three years under Study

The table below (Table 4.3) shows that in the three years under this study a total of 18 ICT-related projects were taken in the eight (08) unions.

Table 4.3: Number of ICT related projects taken under LGSP fund in the last three years

Name of the Union	Number of Projects
Putimari	3
Ranchandi	2
Garagram	2
Bahagali	2
Chandkhana	2
Magura	3
Nitai	1
Barvita	3
Total	18

4.14 The Process of Selecting LGSP Projects

The study shows that the level of people’s participation in selecting projects under LGSP is incremental which can be seen in figure 4.13.

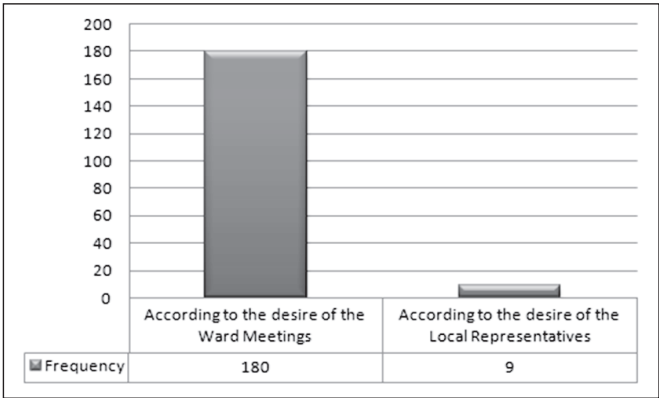


Figure 4.13: Process of selecting LGSP projects

4.15 Frequency of Ward Meetings held by UPs

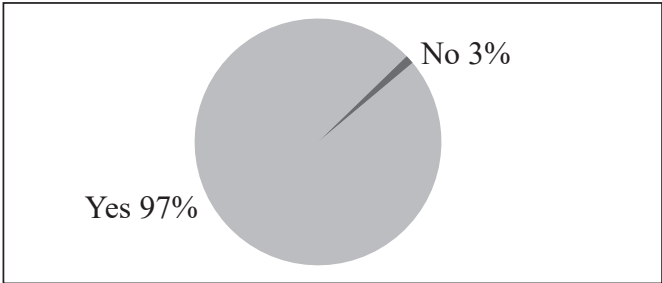


Figure 4.14:Regularity of Ward Meetings

4.16 Number of Ward Meetings held in a UP Yearly

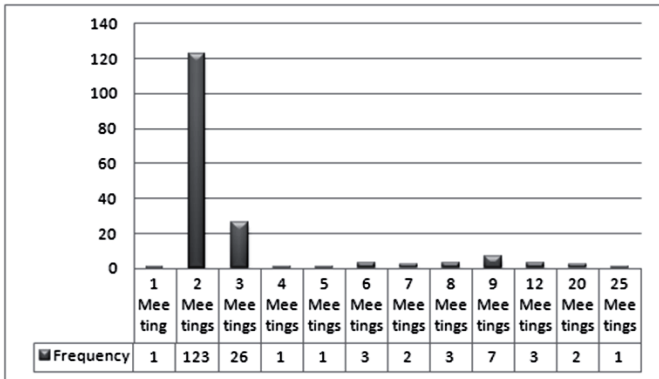


Figure 4.15: Number of Ward Meetings held in a UP Yearly

4.17 Level of Common People's Participation in Ward Meetings

In response to the question, 99% responded positively while only 1% thought otherwise.

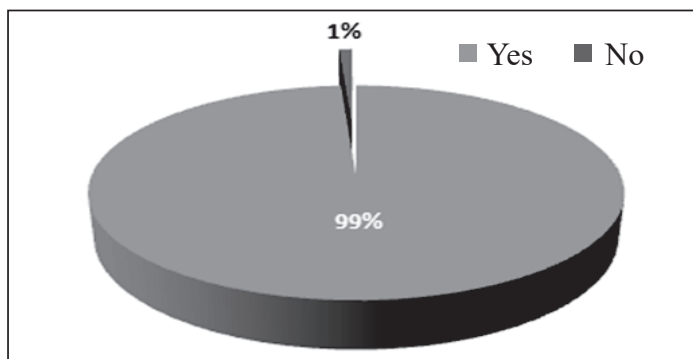


Figure 4.16: People's Participation in Ward Meetings

4.18 Projects taken for Job Creation

Significant (91%) number of the respondents told that projects are prioritized for job creation.

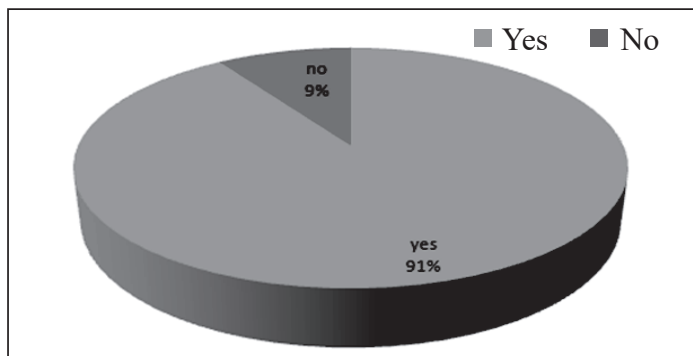


Figure 4.17: Projects taken for Job Creation

4.19 Imparting ICT training to unemployed youth

Besides providing some training for income generation by the UPs, significant number of ICT related trainings are conducted to enhance skills of the unemployed youths (99%).

4.20 Outcome of ICT training to unemployed youth

Significant number of respondents (59%) opined that their job skills have been improved due to ICT related training provided by UPs under LGSP, while 32% respondents mentioned that they have started providing small scale training to local youths commercially. Whereas only 7% stated that the training did not change their condition.

4.21 Types of projects taken under LGSP fund

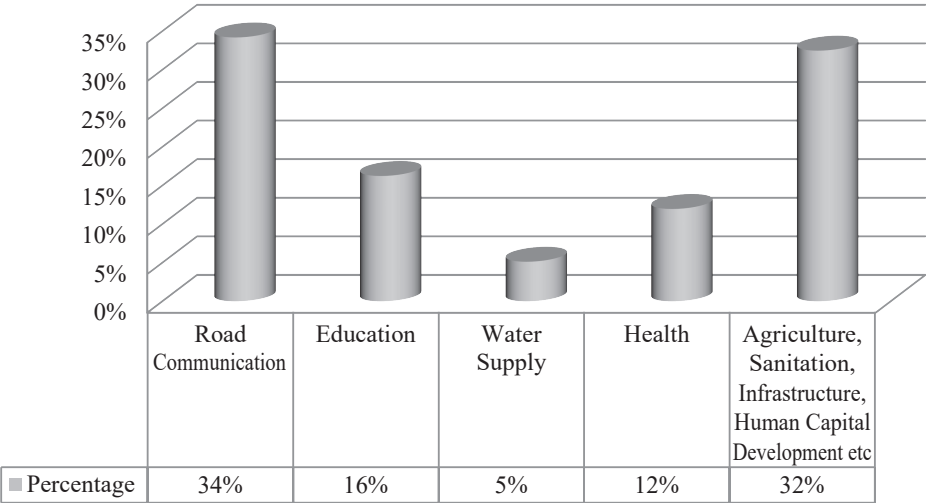


Figure 4.18: Types of projects taken under LGSP fund

4.22 Creating Entrepreneurship through ICT Training

Majority of the respondents (66%) opined that ICT training under LGSP helped create entrepreneurship whereas 34% said negatively.

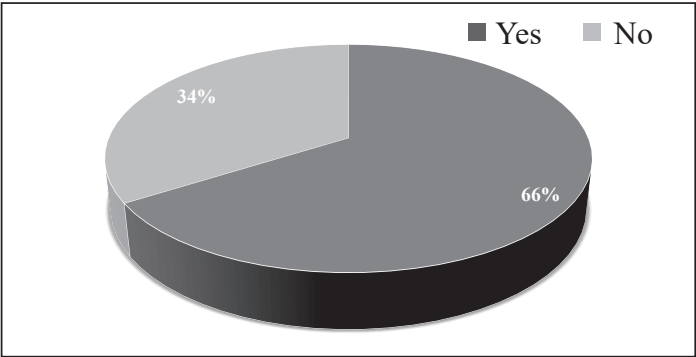


Figure 4.19: Creating Entrepreneurship through ICT Training

4.23 Percentage of Expenditure to Train the Unemployed Youth under LGSP Budget

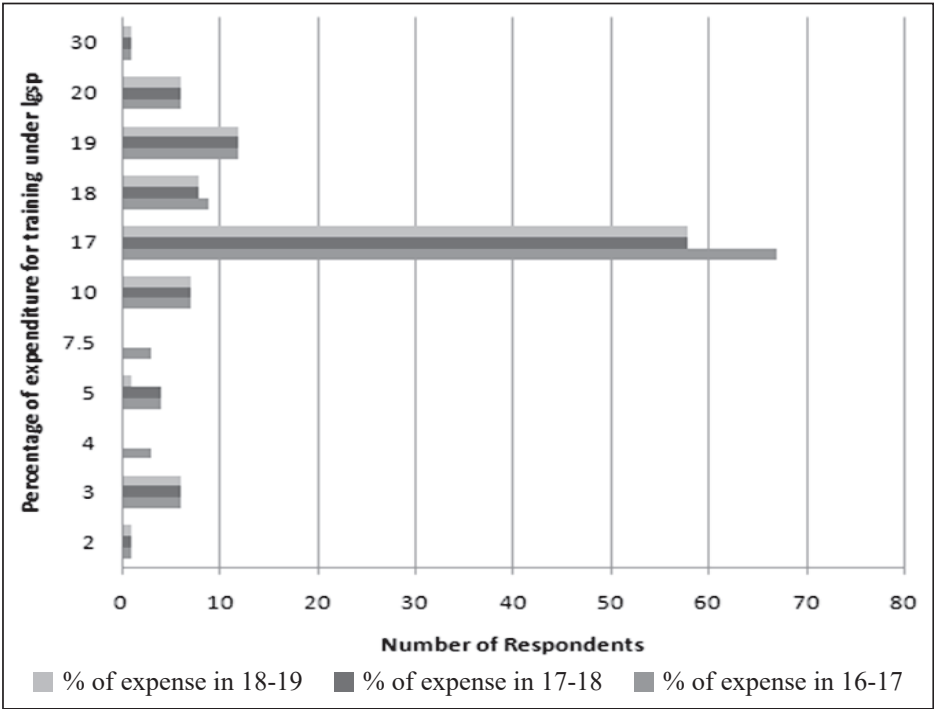


Figure 4.20: Percentage of expenditure to train the unemployed youth

4.24 Impact of Audit Report

Significant number of respondents (66%) mentioned that the impact of audit report in taking future projects under LGSP was very high and 17% said high. On the other hand, 8% of them thought to have medium impact, 7% expressed to be low and only 2% mentioned very low.

4.2 Key Findings of FGD with Beneficiaries of LGSP

Regarding the status of ICT system in the Union Parishad, the participants who were beneficiaries mentioned that they have two labs in their Union. However, those were not functioning properly other than the UDCs located at UP Complex having only two laptops. Thus, they need to depend on UDC or Upazila or district headquarter in some cases.

While asking about the contribution of LGSP for improving ICT literacy they mentioned that generally, under LGSP, construction of roads,

culverts, installing tube well, renovation of drainage and sewerage system are priority areas for getting project and people's participation in these projects are poor. However, people's participation are more on the project like training sewing machine for the women, computer training for the educated unemployed; though the number of project in this area is very insignificant.

Regarding making LGSP effective in case of building capacity of unemployed, the beneficiaries and entrepreneurs emphasized on proper auditing for ensuring the transparency of the projects taken and focused on implementation of projects by the professional contractors other than the local people who are mainly chosen by elected representatives. To create employment under this project, they suggested more skilled oriented projects such as training programs on ICT and sewing. The participants opined that if the government officials such as UNO or other officer supervise the projects under LGSP directly, the project will be successful. Though auditing is mandatory, sometimes it becomes impossible to conduct because of lack of manpower.

Question regarding whether any challenges remain in LGSP, respondents replied that the main challenges were identified as lack of monitoring, demand of taking service from UDC is huge whereas the capacity of UDC is not sufficient enough to provide services. Besides, lack of advance level training, especially on IT, for employment generation, lack of continuity of policy or program after transfer or changing the officials such as UNO.

To address the above mentioned challenges following issues can be considered, according to the participants of FGD:

- Status of the projects should be discussed in the Upazila Coordination Meeting and Monthly meeting
- Entrepreneurs can get the opportunity to join the meetings
- Regular IT training including advanced level through UDC
- Beneficiaries /stakeholder consultation should be ensured during taking any project etc.

4.3 Key findings of FGD with Member of Civil Society

In response to what extent LGSP improve ICT literacy through people's participation they mentioned the elected representatives take the project

with the consultation of the local people through Ward Meeting theoretically since elected representatives signed on behalf of people. Therefore, projects under LGSP are not participatory as local people cannot provide their opinion.

They also said the ICT related projects increases the skilled of trainees which ultimately creates employment opportunity. Around 100 freelancers are now working in this Upazila who have taken IT training earlier under the project of LGSP. Therefore, projects under LGSP should be need based and demand based and focus should be given on the educated unemployed youth while taking projects.

They also suggested to allocate 50% of money for the purpose of ICT related project under LGSP since these types project are mostly effective compare to other projects. Even, hygienic training for the school going adolescents can be incorporated along with provision of providing sanitary items for the adolescent girls.

To address the above mentioned challenges following issues can be considered:

- Status of the projects should be discussed in the Upazila Coordination Meeting monthly
- Regular IT and technical training through UDC
- Providing advanced level IT training
- Ward Meeting should be organized regularly and
- Beneficiaries / stakeholder consultation should be ensured

4.4 Key Findings of FGD with government Officials.

The participants reported that they were not invited to any Ward Meeting. Therefore, they could not give concrete opinion on the level of people's participation in taking projects under LGSP. The participants opined that at least the tag officers should be invited to the Ward Meetings so that they can contribute. They also said that in order to enhance transparency of such meetings UNO should be informed and officials can connect online. The participants suggested that several initiatives can be taken to increase participation such as hanging routine of the meeting at open place; announcing the time and date in social media; informing people about the meeting date and time through miking; informing students

about the meeting date and time to convey that information to their parents etc. They also opined that this issue should be included in the agenda of Upazila Monthly meeting so that we can know the updates.

The participants were agreed on the point that ICT projects are much more effective than any other projects. Thus, in order to make LGSP more effective in building capacity of the unemployed more capacity building projects related to ICT should be taken. The participants said that there is a tendency among the local representatives to take construction related projects. The participants also suggested that the authority can collaborate with other training institutions to send the learners for advanced training on ICT.

They emphasized on other capacity building training projects on livestock rearing, sewing, adult education, food processing, gardening and fish cultivation. They believe that this will surely contribute a lot to solve the unemployment problem.

Based on the discussion the following issues can be considered:

- Informing UNO and other tag officers about the Ward Meeting and connecting them online.
- Announcing the routine of Ward Meeting via different media
- Status of the projects taken should be discussed in the Upazila Coordination Meeting
- Regular bases IT and technical training through UDC
- Providing advanced level IT training under LGSP
- Ward Meeting should be organized regularly and

4.5: Key Finding of FGD with Local Elected Representatives

While conducting FGD at Kishorganj Upazila Chairman of Puthimari Union said they have computer in the lab but there is scarcity of computer trainers. Chairman of Bahagili Union said, the computer training given earlier was very effective but it was only for 15 days. Thus, he suggested extending the time of computer training.

Chairman of Nitai Union said they have computer and projector at school level but internet service is very poor thus they can't even run several computers and projectors at a time. Therefore he demanded to take another project or initiative to supply internet facility.

Chairman of Barvita Union said they got very good result of the computer training they received. Local students as well as unemployed youth become benefitted through that training. But as it was for short tenure, students did not get enough opportunity to be expert in that field.

Chairman of Magura Union expressed concern and said it is essential to check a list of those who received computer training but not applying or practicing. He suggested to counseling with them to know their problem and take appropriate measures to make them effective.

Chairman of Ranchnadi suggested conducting a survey to assess the need based on the youth interest so that project can be desiged on the basis of youths' need and interest. It will help to keep data management about those who have knack on ICT or freelancing.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The LGSP is proposed to support the comprehensive decentralization measures of the country by strengthening UPs as a pivotal local government institutions. This project also aimed to promote need-based rural infrastructure development by UPs. In achieving the aim, LGSP initiative tries to ensure a strong linkage between local government institution and Nation Building departments. Considering the socio-economic status of the local communities, it is therefore a national vision to develop the rural areas to provide better service in the local communities. In identifying the need-based development, the local communities urged to take ICT related project to get better service. As a result, the LGSP has implemented ICT related project with the involvement of local participation to train up the communities. Therefore, this study aimed to assess how participation makes LGSP effective in improving ICT literacy in rural areas of the Country. The study also figured out how LGSP plays role to build capacity of students and unemployed people of the study area.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings the study provides the following recommendations to make the ICT related training effective and overcome the existing challenges:

5.1.1 Preparation of regional need based training manual

It is essential to have an effective and need based training manual to impart ICT training where all the e-governance tools will be

accomplished based on regional need. Thus, training manual should be prepared emphasizing very nominal functions of ICT and female trainer should be assigned to conduct training for the women specially aligning to the school/college ICT books syllabus so that students find interest to learn after the school time.

5.1.2 Locally Relevant and Local Language Based Contents

Since most of the ICT related training manual found English and therefore it become difficult for local people to understand. Thus, it is essential to develop manual considering community language and culture.

5.1.3 Reliable and Continuous Power Supply

One of the major challenges of imparting effective ICT training is uninterrupted power supply. Therefore, either uninterrupted power supply or alternative source of power is necessary during conduction of a digital programme at office or school hours.

5.1.4 High Speed Internet

Study experienced that the present internet speed in the UDC is very low. Generally, modem and mobile data are used in the UDCs which are very slow in providing high speed of internet. It would better if it can be used 4G/WIFI modem or broadband connection for providing quick e-services among the rural people.

5.1.5 Develop Infrastructural Facilities

IT Infrastructural facility is very crucial for building Digital Bangladesh and ensuring effectiveness of LGSP through ICT related Project. Therefore, broadband line is a crying need however, offices of sub-marine link are restricted to metropolitan region. Its boundless use should be extended up to rural level.

5.1.6 Effective Role of Elected Representative of Local Government

Elected representatives are the key persons to make the common people aware and involving with a particular job of their area. Thus, it is essential to make them involve in imparting computer training and can ensure participatory and fruitful.

5.1.7 Ensuring Participatory Training

The success of any project which has direct involvement with community

people must have to be participatory mode. Thus, to get maximum benefit and to achieve the objectives of the project, it is obliged to ensuring involvement of all stakeholders.

5.1.8 Taking more ICT Related Projects

The study has found ICT literacy related training more effective in building capacity for the unemployed youths. Therefore, more ICT related projects should be taken under LGSP. The study findings emphasize the need of allocating more ICT related projects which is also one of the prime objectives of the study.

5.1.9 Awareness Building

In context of Bangladesh, knowledge and skills on computer using is still not up to the desire. It could be possible when concerned people will be aware on it. As computer training is a income generating means as well as it is literacy that contribute to increase human development, therefore people should give more importance on acquiring IT skills.

5.1.10 Taking Promotional Activities

People in the grassroots level are not well aware about the functions of UDC. As a result, two third of the UDCs are not running well. Thus, Local political leaders' like- UP chairman, Members, Teachers, Government Officials and mass media can play active role in this regard.

5.1.11 Make UDCs as Center of Excellence

From the economic point of view, UDC can possibly turn into a business center point. Hence, UDC can be made as a one stop service providing place for both government and non-government exercises. Therefore, it is vital to make the best use of UDC through imparting ICT training and it will be rational if UDCs keep open round the clock for providing service.

5.1.12 Timely Evaluation of ongoing Projects

Since the social and cultural context in Bangladesh varies from region to region, the project design and implementation strategy should not be unique for entire country. If the necessity arises to bring any changes in project implementation process, it should be notified by quarterly or mid-term evaluation. Therefore, it is also required to conduct time to time assessment of the project.

5.1.13 Trained Entrepreneurs

The study found that after receiving training from the computer labs, a number of youth under LGSP have become entrepreneur. They have established small training centre at the local markets or growth centres. Thus enterprenurship developed amomg the trainees. Hence, it is essential to link up them with the other program run by youth development, Bangladesh computer council or ministry of social welfare so that they become professional.

5.1.14 Provision of Easy Loan for Entrepreneur

To boost up the local entrepreneurs and make their business sustainable, provision of soft loan is necessary. Government as well as NGOs and other development partner should take necessary step to provide them loan.

5.1.15 Village data centre provisioning Network Management System (NMS)

After ensuring effectiveness of UDCs, it is time to set village data centre provisioning network management system to cover whole societal people at grass root level and bring them under data repository management.

Bibliography:

- Khan, Z .R. (2000) Strengthening Local Government in Bangladesh: Recent Experience and Future Agenda, Centre for Policy Dialogue, Dhaka
- Kochanek, S. A.(2000) ‘Governance, Patronage, Politics and Democratic Transition in Bangladesh’
- Mohammad, Sheikh Noor (2010), “people’s participation in development projects at grass-root level: a case study of Alampur and Jagannathpur union parishad” Master in Public Policy and Governance Program Department of General and Continuing Education North South University, Bangladesh
- Obaidullah, A.S.M (2009) People’sParticipation in Development Process through Decentralized Local Government, unpublished Thesis MA in Governance and Development, IGS, BRAC University
- Rahman, M. H.(1995),“Decentralization, Access and Bureaucracy’s Framework for Discussion”Administration and Diplomacy Vol-3, No.-1 & 2,January-December,1995

- Hasan, SM Mehedi (2013), “Organizational culture and participation in local governance: a study on infrastructure projects under LGSP in Bangladesh” MAGD Program Thesis Papers (Brac Institute of Governance and Development) [145], Ayesha Abed Library, Brac University.
- Harvey, D. (1969) *Explanation in Geography*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, London: Edward Arnold.
- Ahmed, N. (2010). Bangladesh Local Governance at Work: Learning from the Field, End Poverty in South Asia, World Bank Blogs. Retrieved 13 June 2020 from <https://blogs.worldbank.org/endpovertyinsouthasia/bangladesh-local-governance-work-learning-field>
- Alink, M & Kommer, V.V. (2011) *Handbook on Tax Administration*, IBFD.
- Aminuzzaman, S. M. (2010). Local government and development in bangladesh lessons learned and challenges for improving service delivery of union parishad (UP). Local Governance Support Project-Learning and Innovation Component (LGSP-LIC).
- Baxter, C., Malik, K., Kennedy, H., & Obest, C. (2002). *Government and Politics in South Asia*. Colorado: Westview.
- D, Biback. (2020). The Role of Union Digital Centre to Ensure People's Participation at Sylhet Sadar, Bangladesh. Review of Public Administration and Management. Retrieved 18 June 2020 from <https://www.longdom.org/open-access/the-role-of-union-digital-centre-to-ensure-peoples-participation-at-sylhetsadar-bangladesh.pdf>
- Government of Bangladesh. Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs. (2020a), *The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh*. Dhaka. Retrieved June 13, 2020, from <http://bdlaws.minlaw.gov.bd/chapter.php?id=367>
- Government of Bangladesh. Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development & Cooperatives. (2020b), *History of LGSP-3*. Dhaka. Retrieved June 13, 2020, from <http://www.lgsplgd.gov.bd/webGeneralContent/view/258?lang=en>
- Government of Bangladesh. Local Government Division. (2020c), *Project (LGD)*. Dhaka. Retrieved June 13, 2020, from <https://lgd.gov.bd/site/page/e1b4721a-a59a-44c5-bcac-71f688a8c73c/->
- Government of Bangladesh. Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives. Local Government Division. (2016d). *LGSP-3, Environmental and Social Management Framework (Final Draft)*.

- Government of Bangladesh. Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives. Local Government Division. (2015e). The Study of the Upazila Governance and Development Project in the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).
- Government of Bangladesh. Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives. Local Government Division. (2018f). Union Parishad Operational Manual. People's Republic of Bangladesh.
- Hasan, S. M. (2013). Organizational culture and participation in local governance: a study on infrastructure projects under LGSP in Bangladesh (Doctoral dissertation, BRAC University).
- Jahan, F. (2006). Public Administration in Bangladesh. Dhaka: Centre for Governance Studies, BRAC University. Retrieved 12 June 2020 from www.cgs-bu.com
- Jahan, M. (1997), "The Changing Structure of Local Government in Bangladesh: An Overview in Administration "Communication and Society, Vol.1, no.1, pp.91-105.
- Local Governance Support Programme-Learning and Innovation Component (LGSP-LIC): Joint Mid Term Evaluation. (2010) A report published by UNDP (GoB and UNDP Project Document, 2006)
- Noor, A. (1986) Local Government in Bangladesh: Problem and Issues, NILG, Dhaka.
- Panel, I. L. (2002). Digital transformation: A framework for ICT literacy. Educational Testing Service, 1-53.
- Siddiqui, K. (1994) Local Government in Bangladesh, 2nd edition, NILG, Dhaka
- The World Bank. (2017). Implementation Completion and Result Report. Bangladesh Local Governance Support Project II (P124514)

