

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Final Evaluation of Knowledge for Development Management (K4DM) project

The objective of the current study was to do the final evaluation of the Knowledge for Development Management (K4DM) project. The Project emerged as a joint initiative of the Government of Bangladesh (GOB) and the UNDP in September 2014 and will continue until December 2019. The project is being implemented and coordinated by the UN Wing of the Economic Relations Division (ERD) of the Ministry of Finance and supported by the UNDP. The project aimed to promote and facilitate a knowledge-based decision-making process. Moreover, given the current context of declining trend of the traditional Official Development Assistance (ODA), the project attempted to contribute to the process of exploring the innovative alternatives for resource mobilization and its effective utilization through collaboration between all stakeholders and capacity enhancement of ERD. Broad objectives of the Project were as follows:

1. Simplify programming procedures and improve knowledge management
2. Promote new knowledge and resources partnership under the canopy of South-South and triangular cooperation as well as Public Private Partnership (PPP) modality
3. Support a common expert pool, strategic knowledge generation

Along the line of these objectives, the Project had three components, which were the focus of the current evaluation:

Component 1: Coordination for Transformational Results (meaning changes that sustain) of UNDP -led development interventions

Component 2: Collaboration for Transformational Results

Component 3: Support for Transformational Results

The project Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework has set the expected outputs and the targets/indicators of each of the above Components of the Project. Employing this Framework, the current evaluation has assessed the Project Components across the OECD criteria for evaluation: *relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability*.

Methodology of the Study

Methodology of the current evaluation relied on both secondary and primary data collected through both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Secondary data for the study were collected through documentary survey, which included the review of the documents and reports related to the Project *while primary data* were collected through adopting both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Qualitative data were collected through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and FGDs while questionnaire survey was conducted to collect quantitative data to assess *relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability* of the project by using a rating scale.

Findings of the Study

Findings of the study reveal that the project management has been able to spend 81% of the fund released. However, majority of the survey respondents (63%) termed the pattern of expenditure against the allocated money as “moderately satisfactory- satisfactory”. “Value for money” that the Project achieved was found to be moderately high. Project activities were also found to be relevant to the Project objectives-- which testifies to the fact that the funds were judiciously spent. Considering all of the above, on the whole, the efficiency of the Project can be labelled as “moderately satisfactory” (meaning the Project had moderate shortcomings on the front of efficiency (Please see Table 1.3 for the explanation of the Rating Scale used for the evaluation)).

On the front of effectiveness, the project has been able to produce a set of significantly tangible and also non-tangible results within a short span of time. With regard to some of its initiatives the Project has successfully achieved almost all the targets set-forth in the M&E Framework, which include: institutionalizing the issues of leveraging Non-Resident Bangladeshis (NRBs) and South-South Cooperation (SSC) for national development and the creation of an information repository at the ERD called the ERD Pedia. In addition to these, beyond the M&E Framework, the Project also achieved a commendable success in developing the capacity of the officials of ERD and other ministries through arranging a series of skill development trainings and workshops. Apart from these tangible achievements, the Project initiated many nationally important activities (i.e. revision of NEX/NIM¹, activating the Eminent Persons’ Group (EPG) formed to provide inputs to the national policies, preparation of National Human Development Report (NHDR), collaboration in resource mobilization) and attained reasonable progress but finally, they could not complete the process. Consequently, M&E targets corresponding to these initiatives could not be achieved. The evaluators, however, considering the progress achieved already and the nature of the initiatives per se, which need considerable time to produce the tangible results, tended to label them as Project achievements. However, the study found that for two outputs under Component 3, the Project took very little or no initiative which can be termed as the “nonachievements” of the Project. Majority of the survey respondents under the current study termed the overall effectiveness of Components 1 and 2 of the Project as “moderately satisfactory” while the effectiveness of Component 3 was termed as “moderately unsatisfactory”. Thus, taken together all data and information, in terms of effectiveness, the Project can be termed as “moderately effective” one.

With regard to relevance, the Project objectives were found to be relevant to national, international development goals and also with the UNDP priorities. The respondents of the survey unanimously opined that the Project outcomes will remain relevant over time.

The Project has a great potentiality to be sustainable since the Government has already owned many of the Project ideas and results. Some of the Project initiatives namely NRB and SSC have already been considered by the policy makers as the national development priorities. From time to time, the Conferences on these initiatives organized by the Project were Chaired by the Honourable Prime Minister. In addition to this, all the Executive Board Meetings were chaired by the Secretary of the ERD. All these testify the seriousness and commitment of the Government towards the Project ideas. This would increase the possibility of making the project sustainable. Majority of the respondents of the study also

¹ NEX: National Execution Manual used by the Government
NIM: National Implementation Manual used by the UNDP

expressed their optimism by saying that risks involved in making the project sustainable are only “moderate”.

Numerous factors both internal and external to the project were found to be responsible for the Project achievements/nonachievements. Ownership of the Government, dynamic leadership of bureaucracy, and strong advocacy at the Project end were the key factors that facilitated the Project attaining some tangible achievements including: institutionalizing the concepts of NRB engagement, South-South Cooperation and creation of ERD Pedia.

On the other hand, delayed start and lower disbursement of fund than committed, frequent change of leadership at ERD, weaknesses in project design, repeated extension of the project, acute manpower shortage and lack of government support influenced the non-accomplishment of a good number of initiatives. Due to a lack of adequate support from government, project initiatives of integration of NEX/NIM, activation of EPG, preparation of NHDR, collaboration in resource mobilization, rendering service for transformational result could not achieve their targets.

Recommendations

The study has put forward its recommendations under two broad heads, which are as follows:

A. *Considering the Progress Made Thus Far, What Could be the Future Steps*

1. with a view to accomplish the unfinished agenda of the Project, the current project should be continued in its erstwhile form under Phase II.

Phase II of the Project should be started with its activities which produced notable and good outcomes. Noteworthy among such activities include: NRB engagement and South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC).
2. Phase II of the Project should deal with NRB issue in a much wider scale through making NRB Task Force more functionally effective, strengthening NRB Cell at ERD, creating an NRB Pool fund, linking the NRB website at the ERD to the field administration in order for them to be informed about the needs of the NRBs. Overall, the key focus of ERD should be to capture technical knowledge of NRBs.
3. Attempts should be undertaken to institutionalize the concept of SSTC further through establishing a South-South knowledge Centre, creating a SSC Pool Fund, strengthening the SSC Cell at ERD by creating a permanent position for the desk officer at the Cell.
4. A permanent Centre for Capacity Development of International Negotiation Skills of Civil Servants can be created during phase II of the Project. This will help bridging the capacity gaps that currently exist among the Civil Servants on international negotiation skill particularly considering the emerging development dynamics of the country.
5. In Phase II of the Project, the evaluators strongly recommend for making the Eminent Persons’ Group (EPG) operational with a view to establish a formal knowledge partnership between the government and the civil society.
6. The Project has tested many new concepts and a number of new initiatives which can also become stand-alone projects. The Project initiatives including NRB, SSTC, preparation of NHDR are worth mentioning in this regard.

7. ERD should take necessary steps to make the ERD Pedia sustainable through deploying an official-in-charge at the ERD to monitor the functioning of the Pedia, making it accessible to the officials of other ministries alongside ERD and to the academics/researchers.
8. In Phase II of the Project, it is important to give serious consideration to accomplish the preparation of NHDR in order to benefit the national policies through its outcome and for the attainment of SDGs.
9. With a view to bridge the skill gap among the Civil Servants, the evaluation team strongly suggests for continuing the capacity building initiative in a much wider scale and with more investments in phase II of the Project.
10. The Evaluation Team did not manage to collect sufficient evidence with regard to gender-specific targets of project components. In phase II of the project, it is imperative to integrate gender consideration in all components of the Project.
11. Government should go for self-financing/cost sharing mechanisms to sustain the Project initiatives. For such self-financing projects government may seek technical support from UNDP and other donors.

B. What could be further improved if UNDP or any other agency implements a similar project soon

1. ProDoc should be written candidly and reviewed carefully in order to avoid the confusions and uncertainties while project is in operation.
2. Serious attempts should be undertaken to avoid the delayed start of the project through simplifying the lengthy bureaucratic procedure involved in the project approval process as much as possible and making the project management, particularly the PDs, proactive in this regard.
3. Project should have the required number of full-time employees. Projects must have an M&E official and a communication official.
4. Effective leadership role of NPDs is critical for ensuring the optimum performance of a project, for which, dedicating adequate time and attention to the project is indispensable. In order to improve project performance, it is important to ensure that the expertise, willingness, and interest of the NPDs and Deputy Project Directors (DPDs) match with the nature and objectives of a project. Formation of a Project Director's Pool (like the DC Pool) might be helpful for getting a suitable NPD for a project.
5. Adequate care should be taken while selecting the participants of exposure visits and these visits should produce reports on their experiences and the outcome.
6. Projects can be thought of in terms of results chains (Logframe), whereby certain activities produce a set of outputs to influence the final outcomes sought.
7. For future projects, GOB cost sharing should be given serious consideration so that projects do not suffer from uncertainties of funding and the risk of sustainability.