

PART - B
Project Details

14.0 Background Information

14.1 Background with problem statement

: Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in socioeconomic development since its independence in 1971. Over the last 42 years, the real per capita income of Bangladesh increased by more than 550% and the poverty rate was reduced by more than half. The country's real Gross Domestic product (GDP) growth recorded around 6% per annum on average in the 2000s, and reached 6.7% in 2011. This relatively high growth performance was accompanied by a steady decline in the national poverty rate from 56.6% in 1990 to 40% in 2005, and further down to 26% in 2013. Based on the robust growth performance the Government of Bangladesh aims to reduce the national poverty rate to 15% and transform Bangladesh into a middle income country by 2021.

Although rural Bangladesh is poor, it has many characteristics which result in a highly active rural cash economy in which mobility and trading are of crucial importance. The roads under the jurisdiction of LGED play a significant role to serve the vast rural area. They provide local access to farms, social and welfare institutions, village facilities as well as to markets where buyers and sellers assemble to trade products of agriculture and rural industries and other consumer goods. They also provide access to modern inputs to agriculture such as fertilizer and seeds as well as to local places of employment. Evaluation of previously implemented rural infrastructure development projects indicate that the landless and marginal farmers gained a larger share of the increase from crop, wages, livestock and fisheries. Above facts reconfirm that overall development of Bangladesh depends on development of rural infrastructure.

Gaibandah and Kurigram districts are among the remotest poverty as well as disaster prone northeastern districts of Bangladesh. Most miseries in the life of the people are river erosion and this rendered a large number of people homeless, landless, asset less and also in loss of valuable belongings. There is widespread unemployment scenario in the absence of mills and factories in those districts. Only option for a large number of people is selling the manual labors mainly in the agriculture sector which is mainly limited to a single season as such labor class people have nothing to do in the other seasons when cultivation and harvesting period is over. Vast unemployment during off farm seasons brings untold sufferings and misery to the life of people of these areas by common starvation or low calorie intake far below the nutritional requirement, which is widespread known as *monga*.

Among others, lack of rural transport network is the major impediment for socio-economic development of these areas. Major parts of the localities of these areas are isolated from each other by the natural barriers by the river system of Teesta. Brahmaputra and Jamuna. Gaibandah and Kurigram districts are being separated by the river Teesta. The important rural infrastructures and institutions those are vital for rural development like rural transport networks, growth centers, hat-bazar, Union Parishad complex, health centers, educational institutions located nearby the Teesta river are being separated from each other due to barrier by the river Teesta. The construction of Teesta bridge between Sundargong Upazilla and Chilmari Upazilla will establish linkage among the isolated communities, existing transport networks and other rural institutions. Besides, a new transport link will emerge in the region which will shorten the distance of travel between Kurigram district including Bhurunga mari land port with the capital city and southern region by 35-65 km. The network needs a major bridge on the river Teesta in Panchpir Bazar-Chilmari Upazilla HQ road. Many people from the locality including school and college going students, agricultural farmers and businessmen cross the river every day. There are important growth centers on both sides of the river which generate huge number of traffic across the river.

LGED has been implementing number of rural development projects in Gaibandah and Kurigram districts. Medium and small bridge/culverts had been implemented or under implementation in those projects. Construction of bridge on Teesta river could not be addressed under any on going projects of LGED due to need of considerable investment needed for that large bridge.

Rationale:

Efficient rural transport and supporting infrastructure are indispensable in reducing poverty and in achieving a rapid economic development of Bangladesh. The government has made investments in the rural infrastructure sector with substantial assistance from the external development partners including the Asian Development Bank. The Project draws on experience and lessons learned from the previous projects particularly in mainstreaming the participatory approach and empowering local governments. The project area was selected because of the poverty level, poor state of development of road infrastructure, and the need for strengthening local governance. Improving the rural roads and the associated infrastructure will provide effective transport to markets and trading centers, and access to social and welfare services to the local people. These improvements will establish the foundation for better economic opportunities and assist in reducing poverty. Strengthening the local government units will enable them to plan, manage and maintain the local infrastructure. Stakeholders from the private sectors such as bus owners and operators, rickshaw pullers, farmers, and local merchants will be consulted in planning and implementation stage of development activities. Local participation will create sense of ownership that eventually will help the maintenance activities.

Linkage :

The Bangladesh economy is predominantly rural and the majority of people live in rural areas where lack of infrastructure facilities hinders economic growth and limits employment opportunities. Improved infrastructure is critical for reducing the regional divide of growth, enhancing the capabilities of the poor and helping them avail themselves of the economic opportunities of development. Constructing and improving infrastructure, and its operation and maintenance play important roles in reducing rural poverty by creating new employment opportunities for poor men and women; facilitating quick and cost-effective transportation of perishable agricultural commodities to markets; enabling the easy availability of agricultural inputs at reasonable prices; protecting people from natural calamities and bringing central government services closer to the people. Sixth Five Year Plan considers the multidimensionality of poverty and the role of rural infrastructure in attaining regional balance, generation of employment for the poor and increasing access to markets and services. It focuses on prioritizing pro-growth infrastructure, developing rural road communication, and ensuring women's participation and benefit from rural infrastructure development. The Country Partnership Strategy (2006-2010) of ADB for Bangladesh emphasized improving rural connectivity to improve access to market and services, quality of the rural road network and maintenance of roads. In addition, building the capacity of local governments to increase local participation for ensuring effective use and sustainability of rural infrastructure has been identified as a key issue to be addressed.

Criteria for selection of Bridge under this project:

- Traffic volume on the road
- The road's with single gap.
- To increase scope of work for local labors.
- The backwardness of local people
- Enhance for poor literacy rate
- Reduce the density of ultra poor people in disconnected area.

With the above background, to create uninterrupted road network and improve connectivity, this project has been prepared. So, for proposed project would establish well communication network and socio-economic development without disturbing environment. Again before detail design & estimate individual project site will be visited and detailed survey will be done by LGED & Consultant personnel jointly. That is way there is on possibility of duplication with other projects.

The proposed Project is consistent with the Sixth Five Year Plan, it will

14.3 Objectives

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- i) To improve the connectivity between Sundarganj Upazila of Gaibandha District and Chiimari Upazila of Kurigram District, thereby establishing a regional road network between Kurigram and Gaibandha district.
- ii) To facilitate agricultural production, small and medium scale industries through improvement of communication.
- iii) To create immediate and long-term employment opportunities for the rural people through construction of bridge.

14.4 Outcomes

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