

An Exploration of the Prospects of International Standards in Development Project Planning Process in Bangladesh

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Abstract

This study was focused on Traditional and International Standards of the planning process for efficient and timely closure of the development projects in the public sector. It was observed that implementation of development projects through traditional project management process became less effective to achieve the desired impact on socioeconomic development. Comparative analysis depicted that the International Standards of the project management process could be the best alternative for the effective and successful implementation of the development projects. Reviewing the development project planning process, it has been suggested that the International Standards of the project planning process may overcome development project management hurdles in the public sector in Bangladesh.

Key Words: Development Project, Project Planning Process, Project Management, International Standard

1.0 Introduction

The project is “a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result” (A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge 2013). The main objective of the project is to generate some positive outputs. Projects are temporary in the sense that it will terminate upon achieving its goals or management decision (Turner 1996). Development projects are implemented to achieve socioeconomic development of a country (General Economic Division 2012). Different phases of the development project follow the logical sequence. Each development project should have at least initiation, planning, execution and closing phases. Among them, the planning phase is the most important part for successful implementation of the development project. Mišić and Radujković (2015) studied the “success and failure factors of Megaprojects” and emphasized on “competent project management” for successful implementation of the project. Bobera and Trninić (2006) identified that “planning and quality in project management” are very significant for the successful completion of the project. Promoting “contemporary project management practices” have been encouraged for getting the desired outcome from the development projects (Zuofa and Ochieng 2012). Globerson & Zwikaël (2002) emphasized “both planning and execution” whereas Pülmanis (2013) highlighted on “project management tools and techniques” for

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successful completion of the project. Brioso (2015) suggested for utilizing different methodologies to get better results and concluded that “management systems do not compete with each other; all methodologies are compatible if used appropriately”. The importance of the planning phase to project success has given ultimate importance (Serrador 2012).

Project management scholars are concerned about project management processes and its impact on the successful and efficient implementation of the project. Rondinelli (1976) discussed on difficulties of project management in light of developing countries and advised for management policy change. Abedin and Akhtar (2014) studied some industrial projects in Bangladesh and suggested for the improvement of “project management practices”. Hamiduzzaman (2014) focused on the institutional arrangement for planning and management of development projects in Bangladesh. Development projects are implemented to achieve socio-economic development. It aims to conform to the government policies and priorities in various sectors (General Economic Division 2012). Implementation of development projects follows the logical sequence. Each development project should have at least initiation, planning, execution and closing phase (Economic Relations Division 2010). A large number of development projects implemented in the public sector following traditional project management methods.

Few studies conducted on the implementation of International Standards in the project planning process. This study analyzed the scope of implementing International Standards for development project planning process in the public sector. It investigated the contemporary development project implementation processes and recommended the way out for successful and efficient completion of the development projects in public sector. It explored the prospects of implementation of the International Standards in development project planning process in the public sector of Bangladesh.

1.1 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are-

- (i) Analyzing the current planning process of development projects in Bangladesh
- (ii) Investigating the International Standards of the project planning process
- (iii) Evaluating the current planning process and the International Standards of the project planning process for the public sector in Bangladesh
- (iv) Recommendation of the best suited planning process for development projects in the public sector to get the maximum benefit.

1.2 Methodology

Comparative analysis technique has been applied. Various literature, journals, books, publications, websites and other sources have been consulted. Data collected

from various sources have been analyzed and recommended.

1.3 Limitations of the study

Secondary sources have been used to get data for analysis.

2.0 Development planning process in Bangladesh

2.1 Ministry of Planning

Ministry of Planning is the focal point institution for development planning, monitoring and resource allocation for the economic advancement of the country. It consists of three divisions like (a) planning division (b) Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) and (c) Statistics and Informatics Division (SID).

The planning division coordinates development planning and synchronizes resources for the socioeconomic advancement of the country. Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) support socioeconomic development through monitoring and evaluating the development projects. Statistics and Informatics Division (SID) gives the required data and information to formulate the strategic plan for the socioeconomic development of the country. The National Academy for Planning and Development (NAPD) and Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) working under the Ministry of Planning (MoP) give policy support to formulate development planning. Besides, the Economic Relations Division (ERD) maintains international economic relations with international agencies and foreign countries. It explores external resources to implement development projects successfully. On behalf of the country, it makes arrangement to sign contracts with the foreign countries and international agencies.

2.2 Planning Division

Planning Division is the key government agency for development project planning. It gives secretarial assistance to the National Economic Council (NEC) and the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC). It is entrusted for the coordination of the development activities and policies of ministries, divisions and agencies. It also gives directives to prepare development projects. It synchronizes private investment of the country and looks after various bodies under planning division like Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) and National Academy for Planning and Development (NAPD). It researches the different development aspects of the country.

The planning commission is primarily entrusted for development project planning in Bangladesh. It formulates short and medium-term development plan to achieve long term goals and targets. It achieves its target through (a) Policy Planning (b) Sectoral Planning (c) Programme Planning (d) Project Planning and

(e) Evaluation. Honorable Prime Minister is the chairperson of the planning commission and the minister for planning acts as the vice-chairperson. There are other five members at the policy level. Secretary, planning commission acts as member secretary to the commission. It consists of six other divisions like (1) Programming Division (2) General Economic Division (3) Socio-Economic Infrastructure Division (4) Physical Infrastructure Division (5) Industry & Energy Division and (6) Agricultural, Water Resources and Rural Institution Division.

2.3 National Economic Council (NEC)

National Economic Council decides on economic affairs of the country. It is the highest body of the nation which looks after the policy related to economic development. The honorable Prime Minister is the chairperson and all ministers are the members of the committee. Cabinet Secretary, Governor of Bangladesh Bank, all Members of the Planning Commission and Secretary of concerned ministry or division play the supporting role of the committee.

National Economic Council gives direction and guidance to formulate various development plans, programs and economic policies. It also finalizes and approves policy, program or project which it considers necessary for the socioeconomic development of the country. It also reviews the progress of development programs from time to time.

2.4 Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC)

The honorable Prime Minister is the chairperson of Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC). It considers and approves project concept papers of all investment projects. It also reviews the progress of development projects and the financial performance of the statutory corporations. It analyzes the economic situation of the country and gives policy directives. The committee evaluates socioeconomic indicators and takes necessary measures to achieve the development goals.

2.5 Development administration of Bangladesh

The planning commission plays the crucial role for development project planning and approval process. It is supported by other ministries and divisions. Development project planning process starts within the ministries/divisions to meet the development targets set for socioeconomic development of the country. They follow the guidelines set by the planning commission. After finalizing development project proposal (DPP), ministries/divisions submit it to the planning commission for necessary approval by the ECNEC/NEC. It takes planning inputs from external sources like Statistics Division, Bangladesh Bank and other sources. Finance Division, Internal Resource Division (IRD) and Economic Relations Division

(ERD) provide necessary inputs to plan internal and external resource allocation for the development projects. They are also responsible for both internal and external resource mobilization and availability.

Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) provide the progress report of the individual development project for resource allocation and to take project related other critical decisions. NEC and ECNEC play a vital role for approval, resource allocation and take other decisions for any individual project based on the information provided before it.

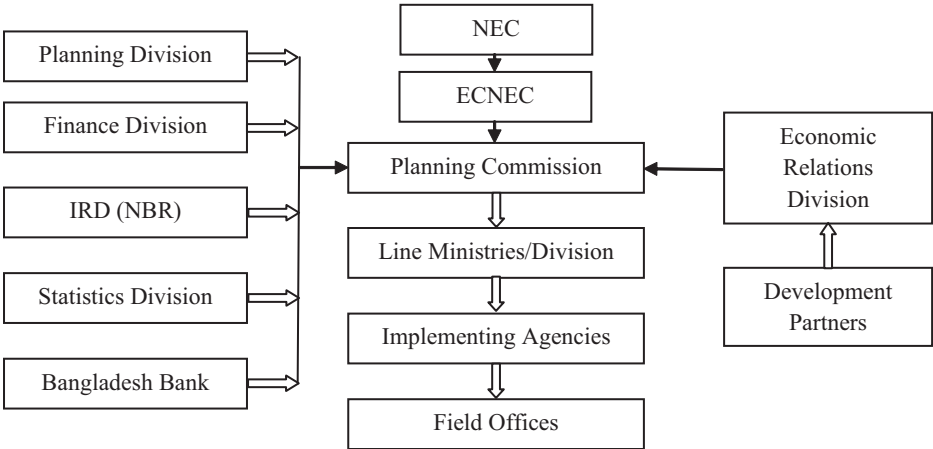


Figure- 01: Development Administration in Bangladesh
[Source: Economic Relations Division (ERD)]

2.6 Standard Operating Process (SOP)

From initiation to final approval, every project has to follow a series of processes which is called Standard Operating Process (SOP). It includes project inception, formulation, review, assessment, appraisal, evaluation and approval. Different authorities complete different tasks. Implementation agency/department, line ministry/division and planning commission are three main agents involved in project planning and approving process. Every project pass through different stages such as-

(a) Project inception: The implementing agency/department initiates development project under budget allocation, assigned responsibility and previous experience of project implementation. Each agency/department attempts to achieve development goals through implementing various development projects and programs. They conduct various studies/surveys and gather necessary information for project inception.

(b) Project formulation: Agency/department formulates Development Project in Development Project Proposal (DPP) format and Technical Assistance Project in

Technical Assistance Project Proposal (TAPP) format following guidelines issued by the planning commission. They include all necessary information for project appraisal by the ministry/ division. Agency/department submits the project proposal to the ministry/division for further evaluation and approval.

(c) Project assessment: After submitting DPP/TAPP, acceptability is assessed by the planning wing/branch of the ministry/division. If the project proposal meets the necessary criteria set by the ministry/division, it is placed before the Project Evaluation Committee (PEC) for necessary approval. To assess the project proposal, planning wing/branch of the ministry/division considers the national and ministerial strategic policies and other development policies set by the government. They also assess the priority of the ministry/division, prior experience to implement such project, sustainability, possible risk factor, realistic financial and economic analysis, expected benefits and resource allocation and budgetary constraint of the ministry/division.

(d) Project evaluation by line ministry/division: Development and planning wing/branch of ministry/division prepares a working paper for the Project (Special) Evaluation Committee (P(S)EC) based on the information provided by the agency/department. P(S)EC headed by the secretary of the ministry/division considers everything of the project and decides to send it to the planning commission for necessary approval.

(e) Consultation with the Finance Division: If the project contains the proposal of new human resources, then it is referred to the Finance Division for necessary approval of project workforce approval. After scrutinizing the proposal, Finance Division gives consent on the proposal or rejects it and sends it back to the line ministry/division.

(f) Preliminary appraisal by Planning Commission: After submission by the line ministry/ division, respective wing/sector-division of planning commission makes detail appraisal of the DPP/TAPP and prepares the working paper for the Project Evaluation Committee (PEC). If respective wing/sector-division is not satisfied after scrutinizing the documents, they send it back to line ministry/division for necessary amendment or modification. For an appraisal of the DPP/TAPP, Planning Commission coordinates inter and intra-sectoral allocation, consider the national priority, implementation capacity of the ministry/division and coherence of the ongoing projects. It also focuses on resource allocation and mobilization.

(g) Project evaluation by the Planning Commission: Respective wing/sector-division place the DPP/TAPP before the Project Evaluation Committee (PEC) for necessary approval or recommendation. If the Project Evaluation Committee (PEC) satisfies, it would recommend the minister of planning to approve the project or referred it to ECNEC for necessary approval. If the Project Evaluation Committee (PEC) recommends any recast or revision, then the line ministry/ division ensures

recommended recast or revision. Incorporating important recast/revision line ministry/division submits it to the planning commission for necessary approval.

(h) Approval by the NEC/ECNEC: The NEC/ECNEC is the highest body for project approval process. They can approve any project proposal considering appropriate for national interest. The NEC/ECNEC meeting is chaired by the honorable Prime Minister.

(i) Final approval letter issued by the Planning Commission: After getting approval by the appropriate authority, the Planning Commission issues the approval letter to implement the DPP/TAPP. After getting an approval letter issued by the planning commission, the implementing ministry/division implements the development project.

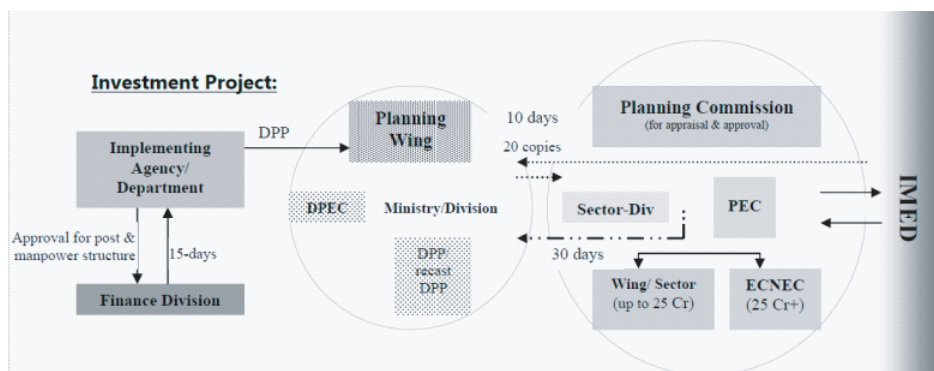


Figure- 02: Project Approving Process [Source: ERD]

3.0 International standard of project planning process

3.1A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK Guide)

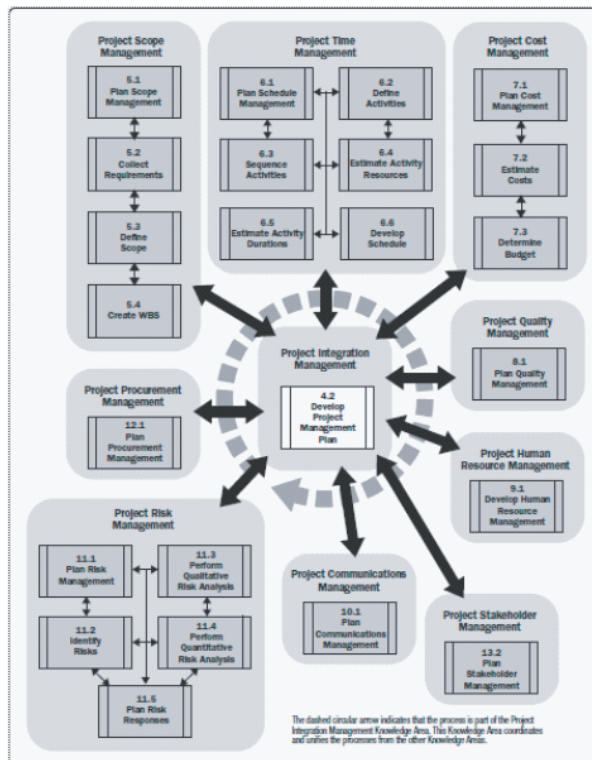
According to A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK Guide), project management is divided into five project management process groups, 47 project management processes and ten project management knowledge areas. The management process groups are inter-dependent and highly interacted with each other. These process groups can interact within the group or among other groups. This interact varies from project to project. It also does not follow any particular fashion. The project management process groups are-

- (1) Initiating process group
- (2) Planning process group
- (3) Executing process group
- (4) Monitoring and evaluation process group
- (5) Closing process group

The planning process group is the most important part of the project management process. It consists of those processes which establish the entire scope

of the effort, define and refine the objectives, and develop the course of actions required to attain the objectives. Among 47 project management processes, 24 project management processes include in this group. It also covers all the ten project management knowledge areas. The project management processes that fall under the Project Planning Group are-

- (1) Develop Project Management Plan (2) Plan Scope Management (3) Collect Requirements (4) Define Scope (5) Create WBS (the process of subdividing project deliverables and project work into smaller, more manageable components) (6) Plan Schedule Management (7) Define Activities (8) Sequence Activities (9) Estimate Activity Resources (10) Estimate Activity Durations (11) Develop Schedule (12) Plan Cost Management (13) Estimate Costs (14) Determine Budget (15) Plan Quality Management (16) Plan Human Resource Management (17) Plan Communications Management (18) Plan Risk Management (19) Identify Risks (20) Perform Qualitative Risk Analysis (21) Perform Quantitative Risk Analysis (22) Plan Risk Responses (23) Plan Procurement Management (24) Plan Stakeholder Management.



3.2 ISO 21500: 2012

ISO 21500:2012 is an international standard issued by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) for project management which provides guidelines for achieving project goals through the systematic procedure. It helps to achieve project goals and objectives by planning, organizing, motivating and controlling resources. The guideline could be followed in the public, private, corporation or community based organizations. Irrespective of complexity, size or duration of the project, this standard could be applied. It emphasizes the principles and practices of the project management.

In ISO 21500:2012, the management process group has been divided into two categories like process groups for the management of the project and subject groups for collecting the processes by subject. There are 39 project processes within five process groups. There are ten subject groups like Integration, Stakeholders, Scope, Resource, Time, Cost, Risk, Quality, Procurement and Communication.

The planning process group is the most important part of ISO 21500:2012. It includes 16 out of 39 project processes. The project processes which fall under the planning process group are-

(1) Develop project plans (2) Define scope (3) Create work breakdown structure (4) Define activities (5) Estimate resources (6) Define project organization (7) Sequence activities (8) Estimate activity durations (9) Develop schedule (10) Estimate costs (11) Develop budget (12) Identify risks (13) Assess risks (14) Plan quality (15) Plan procurements (16) Plan communications.

3.3 Projects IN Controlled Environment (PRINCE2)

The PRINCE2 (Projects In Controlled Environment) is a widely used international standard for project management. It is a structured project management method suitable for any size, type, organization or culture. It is a standard generic method based on proven principles. Six variables are very critical for any project. The six aspects of project performance should be managed namely Costs, Timescale, Quality, Scope, Risk and Benefits. This method consists of four integrated elements like principles, themes, processes and the project environment.

There are seven principles in the PRINCE2 standard like (1) Continued business justification (2) Learn from experience (3) Defined roles and responsibilities (4) Manage by stages (5) Manage by exception (6) Focus on products and (7) Tailor to suit the project environment. These principles are indicative of obligations and good practices that decide whether the project is being managed genuinely using PRINCE2.

The themes of PRINCE2 emphasize on aspects of project management which should be observed throughout the project continuously. There are seven themes

like Business Case, Organization, Quality, Plan, Risk, Change and Progress. These themes address the chronological flow of the project management process throughout the project cycle. The themes may be tailor made to fit depending on nature, scale and complexity of the project.

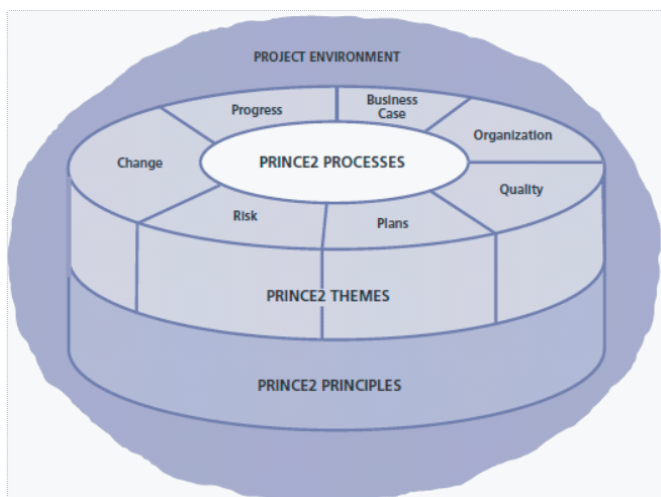


Figure- 04: Structure of PRINCE 2 [Source: Managing Successful Projects with PRINCE2™, 2009]

PRINCE2 is a process based project management system which elaborately describes every step from starting to the closure of the project life cycle. The seven processes provide guidelines for activities to direct, manage and deliver a project effectively and successfully. The processes in PRINCE2 are (1) Starting up a project (2) Directing a project (3) Initiating a project (4) Controlling a stage (5) Managing product delivery (6) Managing a stage boundary and (7) Closing a project.

4.0 Discussion

Development projects are implemented “to drive development and to contribute toward the alleviation of the effects of most social, political, and economic problems” (Zuofa and Ochieng 2012). Zuofa & Ochieng (2012) emphasized to engage highly competent and trained personnel and to establish project management culture and standard within the organization and government establishment. Stuckenbruck and Zomorrodian (1987), Kerzner (2009) and Hyvari (2006) suggested for standardized project management techniques. They have argued that such techniques will allow the project management team in the developing countries to plan and implement development projects with the higher level of precision and synergy which will result in more efficient and faster project outcomes. Project success depends on completion of the project within specified timeframe and budget following the desired specification. According to Globerson and Zwikael (2002) proper planning and execution of the project are the key factors for successful

project completion. They argued that if planning is formulated properly, it will improve the quality of the project. Time spent on planning and analysis will reduce risk and increase project success (Serrador 2012). Alternatively, inadequate analysis and planning may lead to a failed project (Morris 1998, Thomas et al. 2008). If poor planning has led to failed projects, then perhaps lots of resources will go in vain (Sessions 2009). Mintzberg (1994) as cited by Serrador (2012) stated that “planning as the effort to formalizing decision-making activities through decomposition, articulation, and rationalization”. Thomas et al. (2008) emphasized on project planning and stated that “the most effective team cannot overcome a poor project plan”. Projects started down the wrong path can lead to the most spectacular project failures. Morris (1998) argued that the decisions made at early stages of the project would affect the strategic framework and inadequate planning hampered the project execution for a long time. Munns and Bjeirmi (1996) stated that for a project that is flawed from the start, successful execution might matter only to the project team, while the wider organization would see the project as a failure. Blomquist et al. (2010) affirmed that “plans are a cornerstone of any project; consequently, planning is a dominant activity within a project context”. Serrador (2012) concluded that “planning associated with project success; both project efficiency and overall project success”.

International bodies like Project Management Institute (PMI), International Organization for Standardization and Office of Government Commerce, UK have issued various International Standards for project management. A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK Guide) issued by the Project Management Institute, Inc. “provides guidelines for managing individual projects and defines project management related concepts. It also describes the project management lifecycle and its related processes, as well as the project life cycle” (PMBOK Guide 2013). It has given ultimate emphasis on project planning. Among 47 project management processes, 24 project management processes include planning which touch all process seven groups and ten project management knowledge areas. It has elaborately described all the processes of successful and efficient project closure and delivering project benefits.

International Organization for Standardization has issued a set of project management standard called ISO 21500:2012. It is a set of project management standard widely used for successful completion and effective project management purpose for all kinds of projects regardless of sector, size, location and complexity. It provides “guidance on concepts and processes of project management that are important for, and have impact on, the performance of projects” (Zandhuis and Stellingwerf 2013).

PRINCE2 is an International Standard for project management issued by the Office of Government Commerce, UK. It is also a widely used International Standard for managing projects irrespective of project type, organization or

complexity. It has an option to tailor the processes based on project nature, organizational need, project environment and other related issues. It is a well designed project management method which fulfill necessities of the project management team, improve communication and control over the project activities throughout the lifecycle of the project. Especially, it gives emphasis on planning process of the project which provides information to all project personnel on:

- What is required
- How it will be achieved and by whom, using what specialist equipment and resources
- When events will happen
- Whether the targets (for time, cost, quality, scope, risk and benefits) are achievable

Development projects in the public sector are prepared in a wider range. These are diversified in size, nature, organizational need, project environment and complexity. The project management team is more complex and diversified and at the same time less result oriented. International Standards of project management can guide the project management team in the public sector to more result oriented. Planning of the development projects following the International Standard of project management processes will provide a good start. It may lead to successful and efficient closure of the projects in such a complex and diversified environment, thus to achieve the desired impact on socioeconomic development of the country. The International Standards of project management processes are widely used both in the public and private sectors. It may overcome development project management hurdles in the public sector, especially for developing countries like Bangladesh.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

Planning process of the development project provides credible control over the lifecycle. It sets baseline to measure progress and provides indication for required adjustment. The traditional method of development project planning process resulted frustrated consequence over successful and timely closure. International Standards set widely accepted parameters and indicators of the project management processes both in the public and private sectors. It could be followed from the inception of the development project to its closure and final evaluation. Development Project Proposal (DPP) or Technical Assistant Project Proposal (TAPP) preparation process could be modified and redesigned according to the International Standards of project management processes. The approval and monitoring procedure of the development project could be customized and updated following the above standards. The following steps could be taken for successful, efficient implementation and timely closure of the development projects in the public sector to get the desired outcomes for socioeconomic development:

- (a) Every development project should follow the International Standard of the project planning process from its very inception
- (b) The International Standards Should be followed throughout the project lifecycle
- (c) Required policy support and amendment should be done to implement the International Standard of the project management processes for development projects in the public sector
- (d) Ongoing development projects should be reviewed and redesigned to ensure desired benefits and outcomes from the projects by implementing the International Standards
- (e) Project management personnel should be trained and well conversant with the International Standards for project management processes. Sufficient training should be given to the project management personnel who are involved throughout the lifecycle of the development projects including project inception, planning, management and closure of the project
- (f) The institutional and legal framework should be redesigned to cope with the International Standard of project management processes to get the maximum benefit.

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