

Delays in Local Government Development Projects in Bangladesh: Causes and Impacts

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Abstract

Successful project outcomes rely on various well-coordinated actions. Delays in projects are often caused by the conventional administrative system and poor coordination among stakeholders. Ministries and departments' Development Project Proposals (DPPs) without thorough feasibility studies or appropriate measures, lead to delays in approval and project execution. Although the Local Government Division undertakes numerous projects with substantial funding, several issues prevent timely completion, including insufficient funds, untrained personnel, inadequate planning, flawed feasibility studies, lack of modern technology, frequent natural disasters, and fluctuating project material costs. Additionally, the protracted administrative process and top-down planning approach do not align with optimal outcomes. The gaps in execution often lead to deteriorated project quality, time and cost overruns, and eventual project failure. In addition to assessing corrective measures—such as structured planning, thorough feasibility studies, compliance enforcement, project prioritization, efficient monitoring, and land acquisition challenges—this study looks into the delays that result in misappropriation of public funds and setbacks in the progress of the Annual Development Programme (ADP).

Introduction

Bangladesh has been implementing various Annual Development Plans (ADPs) to carry out projects since its independence in 1971. In the 1972-73 fiscal year, the Annual Development Programme (ADP) amounted to Tk. 5.01 billion. However, the investment rapidly increased, reaching Tk. 2,02,721 crore in the 2020 fiscal year (Dhaka Tribune, 2019). Similarly, the number of projects initiated in 1972-73 was 882, and this number rose to 1,480 by the 2021-2022

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fiscal year (Plancomm.gov.bd, 2023). Despite this expansion, many projects remain incomplete by the end of the year due to various challenges, including delays in supply mobilization, lengthy approval processes, protracted land acquisition procedures, weak tender documents, and poor coordination among different ministries and divisions (Bangladesh Economic Review, 2023). Additionally, issues such as difficulties in capital release, low rates of project implementation, natural disasters, and inefficient project management create significant barriers to progress, ultimately affecting the overall development trajectory of the government of Bangladesh.

At present, there are 58 ministries and divisions in Bangladesh, and all development ministries and divisions have some development projects by their capacities (Bangladesh National Portal, 2023). Among all the ministries and divisions, the local government division performs most of the development projects (Rural Development Investment. pdf, 2023). Generally, in every fiscal year, the government takes a large number of development projects for the country's balanced development.

Background of the study

Following independence, Bangladesh initiated numerous development projects under the annual programmes and the country's Five-Year Plans. The first Five-Year Plan (1973-78) aimed at eliminating hunger, poverty, and exploitation, with a strong focus on ensuring the country's development. During this time, several social development policies were introduced based on short-term plans (Ahmad, 1980). Every year, the Local Government Divisions undertake numerous infrastructure development projects, but various factors affect the performance of these projects during implementation. As a result, some projects fail to achieve their objectives and are unable to meet the targeted outcomes.

The ADP (Annual Development Programme) is the operational document that consists of all types of GoB plans linked to development projects, technical assistance projects and self-financed projects (Khan, 2016). Linking to this cornerstone, the implementing department or ministries prepare the development project proposal (DPP) based on the ministry's priority and send it to the ministry. The concerned ministry sends the DPP to the planning commission for final approval (Plancomm.gov.bd.2023). The planning commission appraises the proposed documents in compliance with the project objectives, main activities, and other issues recommended by the PEC meeting and finally sends it to the Planning minister or ECNEC committee for final approval. By taking all phases of coordinated tasks, the entire project planning of Bangladesh is accomplished in the following way.

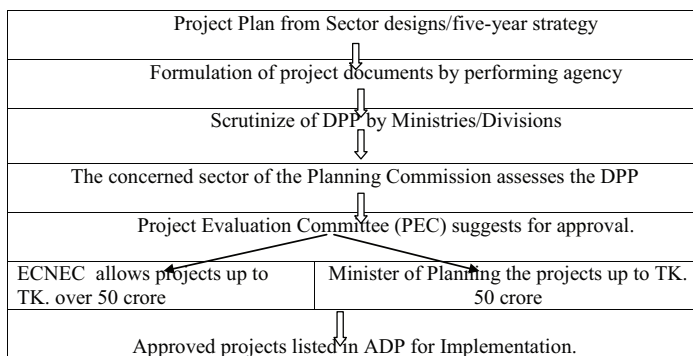


Figure 1: Project approval process

(Source: Plancomm.gov.bd.2023)

Based on the ADP, the ministry takes the project in their respective field by assessing the national priority. The number of projects and public funds has accumulated significantly. To optimize government spending, it's crucial to streamline development projects, ensuring timely completion and effective resource allocation.

As the number of projects increases, there's a risk of diluting resources, leading to inefficiencies. Prioritizing high-impact projects can enhance outcomes, while terminating under performing initiatives can free up funds for more promising ventures. This approach not only maximizes returns on investment but also fosters sustainable development. The following data shows a comparative trend in the rising allocation of the ADP alongside the increasing number of projects. This analysis highlights the link between funding levels and project initiatives over time.

Fiscal Year	No of Projects	ADP Allocation (TK Crore)			No of Projects	RADP Allocation (TK Crore)		
		Total	Taka	Foreign Aid		Total	Taka	Foreign Aid
1972-73	882	501	432	69	882	501	432	69
2015-16	999	97000	62500	34500	1458	91000	61840	29160
2016-17	1123	110700	70700	40000	1415	110700	77700	33000
2017-18	1192	153331	96331	57000	1511	148381	96331	52050
2018-19	1346	173000	113000	60000	1785	176620	124960	51660
2019-20	1475	202721	130921	71800	1572	196479	130900	65579
2020-21	1445	195588	134555	61033	1618	209271	142396	66875
2021-22	1315	236792	144017	92775	1480	217174	143636	73538

Table 1: ADP/RADP Allocation

(Source: Plancomm.gov.bd.2023)

Hence, diverse administrative functions, political and technical issues, and lengthy conciliation between GoB and development partners directly generate the barrier to terminating local government projects (Khan, 2016). This reality leads to additional expense and time overrun. Also, in externally supported projects, the government gives a higher value for the extended duration of the project (NEWAGE, 2019). Consequently, these chronological drawbacks of timely project completion stress on to attain the valid grounds of project obstruction including its counteractive measures to reap the benefits of the local government development projects.

Justification of the Study

The local government division initiates numerous projects and allocates substantial funds for their execution. Despite investing adequate resources to ensure timely completion, some projects extend beyond the approved timeline. Diverse stages of project implementation, such as the conceptual and execution phases, encounter different challenges and constraints, impeding the successful completion of these projects (Mohammad, 2014).

A crucial constituent of Bangladesh's government, the Local Government Division acts as an active entity for socioeconomic development at the local level. In Bangladesh, the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) within the Local Government Division is responsible for executing all infrastructure projects, including roads (Upazila, Union, and Village roads), bridges, culverts, cyclone shelters, growth centers, markets, rubber dams, school buildings, and more as public works. Each fiscal year, the government allocates substantial resources for these projects, yet they often face various constraints that hinder their smooth completion.

Numerous projects are initiated by the local government, yet they often face significant challenges that impede effective execution (Kader & Nur Ullah, 2020). These obstacles not only hinder the development of local government projects but also slow down the progress of the entire country. Bangladesh has advanced from a lower-income to a lower-middle-income nation (Giménez et al., 2014). Hence, it is necessary to pinpoint the specific obstacles to successful project implementation. Insufficient funding, inexperienced staff, poor planning, defective feasibility study, slow fund disbursement, the inefficiency of project director, lack of monitoring, lengthy land acquisition, outdated technology, recurrent natural disasters, and shifting project material costs are the main reasons why project not finished within the specific approved time. The goal of this research is to provide insights into the real cause of project

delay, consequences and corrective actions. By analyzing all the findings and unsaid aspects of project delay, this research will effectively address important remedial measures like suited DPP preparation, decreasing the approval time, using the best monitoring system and maintaining a formulated implementation track, covering responsibilities in all stages and some implicit recommendations for enabling the government to manage project time overruns and additional costs without compromising the all-regular tasks.

Research Objectives

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the persistent factors contributing to project delays and their impact in Bangladesh. Additionally, the article explores the lack of central coordination, challenges during implementation, the inefficiency of project directors, and the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders involved in the planned execution. The specific objectives of this article are to: (a) investigate the reasons for the delay of the local government development projects in Bangladesh; (b) evaluate the impact of the delay of the local government division projects in Bangladesh; and (c) make recommendations for possible measures to reduce the delay in the implementation of local government division projects in Bangladesh.

Literature Review

This section integrates theoretical and empirical perspectives on project implementation and its associated challenges. Initially, a relevant concept will be useful in linking the research objectives and justifying the analytical aspects of the study. Secondly, in line with the objectives, it will aid the literature review in understanding previous studies on various aspects of project delays.

Project obstacles manifest in several forms, including price fluctuations, defective designs, unrealistic estimates, and other unforeseen implementation effects (Shah, 2016). Many designs involve cost escalations that worsen assessments post-completion (Samarghandi et al., 2016). In projects with foreign financing, delays increase problems and extend project timelines, causing the state to incur higher interest due to prolonged agreement periods (Kettlewell et al., 2014). Generally, each project has a start and end date, and feasibility studies are essential before a project begins. Therefore, if the project's utility is not completed as planned, complications may arise. Additionally, project personnel involved in implementation are expected to follow through with their anticipated outcomes (Attarzadeh and Hock Ow, 2008).

Delays in project implementation result in failing to deliver the intended benefits to the public when they are most needed (NEWAGE, 2019). Although the government aims for balanced development by setting national priorities, project selection often deviates from feasibility guidelines due to local elite or political pressure. This incomplete feasibility study leads to abnormal project costs and delayed completion (The Financial Express, 2017). Obstacles to timely project completion arise when approved project costs exceed actual costs during implementation (NEWAGE, 2019). Currently, high-priority projects (first-track projects) funded by donor agency debts are not being completed on time. Key factors contributing to time overruns in these projects include ineffective planning and coordination, delays in awarding project work, late agreement awards, and sluggish decision-making (Hasan, 2018). Additionally, insufficient contractor skills, financial and payment problems, labor issues, slow decision-making, and incomplete planning are crucial factors (Odeh & Battaineh, 2002).

In third-world countries like India and Bangladesh, project delays commonly stem from the managerial activities of project personnel. When project managers or directors fail to complete or manage tasks according to the approved schedule and budget, projects experience negative progress (Islam & Trigunarsyah, 2017). Additionally, internal project activities, such as changes in scope, mitigation expenses, land acquisition costs, strikes, and local government interventions, frequently drive cost increases. Inadequate supervision, construction faults, and changes in specifications also contribute to schedule delays in road construction projects (Kaliba et al., 2009).

Natural disasters are common in Bangladesh due to their deltaic nature, causing work interruptions (Khan & Rahman, 2007). Many underdeveloped and developing countries struggle to sustain construction projects due to severe weather conditions, such as heavy rains, droughts, and floods. Currently, some major and high-priority government projects, like the 'Padma Bridge,' are facing problems due to workforce shortages and the global pandemic, leading to changes in the Annual Development Programme (ADP) (The Business Standard, 2020).

In the construction field, numerous significant causes of delays include land acquisition, frequent environmental impact assessments, and poor site regulation by contractors (Youniss et al., 2017). Often, the absence of commitment among all parties involved in third-world projects creates problems throughout project implementation (Doloi et al., 2012). Many projects are approved with minimal allocations, hindering the optimal use of

government support (Dhaka Tribune, 2018). Delays in critical government projects lead to adverse consequences such as extended timelines, fund mismanagement, cost overruns, arbitration, and litigation (Hasan, 2018).

Multiple international donors invest substantial amounts of money, where the primary concern is the execution of specific projects through soft and hard credit. Consequently, when project work is not completed on time, the government has to pay additional funds for credit payments (Siam, 2017). In Bangladesh, lengthy land acquisition processes, layout changes, fieldwork development, and tender procedures lead to further expenses, which are common issues in infrastructure development projects (The Financial Express, 2020). The World Bank reported in 2017 that the implementation barriers for road construction projects in Bangladesh are higher than in other countries (NEWAGE, 2019). When project conditions are inadequately recognized and managed, project breakdowns become more apparent (Kermanshachi et al., 2016).

There are different proponents for the delay of project implementation in Bangladesh, but there is no specific research or analysis on public-funded projects. While ministry websites provide some basic information on project details, including budget and duration, they lack an in-depth discussion of the barriers to project implementation. This study addresses this knowledge gap by examining the outcomes of these project barriers, the use of government funds, and the patterns of growth. The aim is to ensure the effective utilization of government funds by identifying and eliminating the root causes of project failures.

Methodology

A qualitative approach with individual interviews used as a convenient tool for underpin the actual causes and its adverse side of local government divisions projects delay in Bangladesh. In this study, primary data were gathered from the government employees of the Local Government Division (LGD), Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Department (IMED), and the Bangladesh Planning Commission. The selected interviewees were purposefully chosen, and their combination is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Selected Respondents from Primary Sources

S.E	Ministry/Department/Agency	Designation of the respondents	No of Respondents
1	Local Government division (LGD)	I. Deputy secretary II. Senior Assistant Secretary	2
2	Local government Engineering Department (LGED)	I. Project Director II. Executive Engineer III. Senior Assistant Engineer IV. Upazila Engineer	4
3	Implementation monitoring and evaluation Department (IMED)	I. Director II. Deputy Director	2
4	Bangladesh Planning Commission.	I. Deputy Chief II. Senior Assistant Chief	2

Additionally, secondary references such as ADP details, IMED records, and documents related to state projects, as well as journals, national development programs/plans, daily newspapers, internet articles, and other internal and international research studies, were analyzed.

For conducting interviews, one set of open-ended questions was used. This structured interview format is employed for in-depth investigation. Ten in-depth interviews were conducted where all the respondents were actively engaged with the project activities. Moreover, all of the respondents to the in-depth interviews were actively involved in the project’s operations. Purposive sampling was utilized in concurrence with the deliberate selection of interviewees based on their experiences to guarantee the gathering of reliable and pertinent data.

Content and narrative analysis were employed, systematically categorizing and interpreting textual data. The narrative analysis focused on the structure, content, and context of the messages shared by participants. The interviews were divided into three main areas: the reasons for project delays, the resulting impacts, and potential corrective measures.

Causes of Local Government Project Delay in Bangladesh

Respondents indicated that inadequate project planning and delays during the tendering process are significant issues. Additionally, changes in plans during implementation and insufficient funding often negatively impact ongoing projects. The necessity for skilled employees and efficient workers can lead to extended project timelines. One respondent highlighted that the lack of proper tools and instruments to complete projects on schedule adds to the difficulty.

However, the absence of thorough planning, modern technology, and necessary equipment in remote areas frequently results in delays. Bangladesh’s deltaic geography makes projects vulnerable to natural disasters such as cyclones, floods, and COVID-19, which can disrupt project performance. Contractors often cannot extend work throughout the year due to the rainy season, floods, and other catastrophes, leading to delays. Price fluctuations and exchange rate variations for project materials also adversely affect project progress. Moreover, In Bangladesh, most of the projects were conceived without sufficient per-construction study/feasibility study that propels the project complexities.

Pre-Approval/Feasibility Stage
1. Inadequate Planning
2. Lack of Feasibility Study
3. Insufficient Pre - Study
4. Personnel Shortage
5. Unskill ed staff for DPP/TPP preparation.
6. Planning Guideline Non -Compliance
7. Priority Ignored
8. Mandatory Feasibility Study Not Followed

Table 3: Delays occurred during the Pre-Approval/ Feasibility Stage

The project's implementation steps are inconveniences such as short contract period, selecting the lowest bidder, incompetent subcontractors, and improper procurement contract type that make complex situations. The respondent further added that construction errors during implementation caused the project delay. Again, fraudulent practices, kickbacks, and corruption are liable for project obstacles. The local government projects possess procurement and tender activities and have a bias to offer the work of the most economical bidder. Comparing the public and private projects implementation the private project focuses on their benefits but the government projects need to focus on social interests. Hence, the problem starts from here, and referring to the example of land accusations the respondents said, that when a project requires a significant amount of land, the government cannot force the people and the project director does not start the work timely.

Not hiring the staff/Manpower timely is a frequent cause of project delays. Often, the project director misses recruiting the necessary workers due to the lengthy recruitment policy during the implementation stage; satisfactory fund is not allocated from the finance division. Violation of agreement by the contractors and their negligence in project work lead to worse situations.

After the agreement, the contractor doesn't accomplish according to the schedule plan and attempts to use low-quality materials. The limited qualified contractors and fraud activities by them deteriorate the project quality. Furthermore, from the lengthy administrative process like project formulation to the approval process, there are several steps to go, and takes time. In Bangladesh, the practices of a top-down planning approach are not consistent with better returns. This adverse planning system in place of the bottom-up approach leads to project complexities during the implementation stage.

1. Planning is inadequate.
2. Prolonged Administrative Process
3. Delayed Manpower Approval
4. Inconsistent Planning Approach
5. Approval Process Issues
6. Inappropriate DPP Submission
7. Evaluation Delays
8. IMED Compliance
9. Corrections Requested

Table 4: Delays occurred during the project Approval Stages

It is observed that the local government divisions implement different construction works. Hence, the lack of supply of construction materials led to project delays and the quality of the projects deteriorated. As a result, time overrun is a common feature of public sector projects in Bangladesh where local government projects are not out of the tradition.

Project Implementation Stages		
#	Issue	Description
1	Tendering Process	Tendering procedures are problematic.
2	Changes in Plans	Plans change during implementation.
3	Insufficient Funding	Funding is inadequate.
4	Skilled Workforce	Lack of skilled employees/workers.
5	Lack of Tools	Proper tools and instruments are missing.
6	Outdated Technology	Modern technology is not utilized.
7	Equipment Delays	Delays in sending equipment to remote areas.
8	Natural Disasters	Natural events disrupt project timelines.
9	Contractor Delays	Contractors do not complete work on time.
10	Price Fluctuations	Price and exchange rate variations affect costs.
11	Material Shortages	Shortage of materials and high machinery.
12	Unexpected Material Costs	Costs of project materials rise unexpectedly.
13	Improper Procurement Contracts	Contract types for procurement are inadequate.
14	Incompetent Sub-contractors	Subcontractors lack competence.
15	Lowest Bidder Selection	Selecting the lowest bidder leads to issues.
16	Construction Errors	Errors occur during implementation.
17	Fraud and Corruption	Fraudulent practices and kickbacks.
18	Land Acquisition Delays	Lengthy processes for land acquisition.
19	Timely Hiring Issues	Staff and manpower are not hired on time.
20	Funding Allocation	Satisfactory funding is not allocated.
21	Contractor Negligence	Contractors violate agreements
22	Lack of Experienced Workers	Experienced workers are lacking.
23	Specialized Expertise Shortage	Expert expertise for operations is missing.
24	Monitoring Tools Deficiency	Lack of monitoring tools hinders oversight.

Table 5: Delays occurred during the project implementation stages.

Trained personnel are necessary to perform the project's work successfully, but the lack of experienced workers is one of the fundamental aspects of project management. There are many projects in the local government divisions that demand very specialized expertise for project operation. If the technical works are not completed on time, then other relevant works of the project remain incomplete. The approval process of a project is the first reason to delay the project completion, where a lack of knowledge about the guidelines of the technical assistant project (TAPP) and development assistant project (DPP) establishes the delay of the project approval. Concerning the internal perspectives of local government divisions, it is explored that natural hazards, proper planning, and lack of monitoring tools are the vital causes of project delay.

Delaying outcomes of local government division projects in Bangladesh:

Many local government projects prioritize road infrastructure development. If the road network isn't fully completed, the associated benefits will be lost. Some segments may degrade before the entire project is finished; requiring additional efforts to rehabilitate these sections in order to fully achieve the network's advantages. Based on the respondents' responses and a wide-ranging analysis, the findings regarding the outcomes of project delays are discussed below.

Unforeseen Challenges & misalignment with the project activities

The findings revealed that failure to identify the project's feasibility study, critical paths, and resource needs caused significant delays, disrupting timelines and optimal results. A thorough feasibility study is vital to prevent issues during project implementation, as insufficient analysis can create disordered conditions that delay effective management.

Project Delayed Start

Problems in the tendering process can lead to prolonged selection times, which ultimately push back project initiation. Delays in securing contracts can also create a ripple effect on the project schedule.

Work Stoppages

The absence of necessary tools can halt progress on-site, forcing teams to wait for the right equipment to become available. Besides, utilizing outdated technology can slow down processes and decrease productivity, leading to extended timelines and higher labour costs.

Funding shortages for other projects

The findings highlight that project delays not only escalate costs but also cause funding shortages for other projects. These delays result in cost and time

overruns and compromise the overall quality of the work. Consequently, project delays deprive beneficiaries of timely services.

Modification of timelines and budgets

Repeated changes in project plans can lead to scope creep, requiring re-evaluation and modification of timelines and budgets, thus prolonging the project. However, findings also indicate that if the scope or quality is not managed effectively, the overall output will not be ensured.

Misuse of public funds

During the implementation phases, project delays caused imbalances and led to financial losses for the government. Key stakeholders are not able to fully benefit due to the improper allocation of public funds. The study found that beneficiaries are not receiving the intended services from the government, which were the expected outcomes of the project.

Slows down the development process

Projects funded by development partners incur additional interest costs for the government if not completed on schedule. A respondent noted that the local government division's engagement in the mid-term budgetary framework while creating a three-year projected plan, can hinder the development process due to associated challenges.

Significant works Delays & negative effects on the progress of ADP

Unforeseen natural disasters can stop all work, requiring re-planning and potentially leading to prolonged project completion dates. Moreover, delays in equipment delivery to remote locations create significant bottlenecks, while mismanagement during implementation results in gaps and imbalanced planning, destructively impacting the progress of the ADP.

Slower work rates and quality issues

Inadequate funding can halt or slow down work; extending project timelines requires additional resources. Similarly, a lack of skilled workers and hiring inept subcontractors can lead to slower progress, increased errors, and the need for rework, all of which contribute to delays in project completion.

Operational Delays and Oversight Challenges

Without experienced workers, projects may face slower progress and increased error rates, extending completion times. A lack of specialized expertise can delay specific project tasks, requiring additional training or hiring.

Project oversight suffers due to regular monitoring

If a project is not monitored properly, it can lead to budget overruns, missed deadlines, and poor-quality outcomes. Stakeholder satisfaction may decline, resulting in a loss of trust. Ultimately, this jeopardizes the project's success and long-term viability. Without proper monitoring tools, project oversight suffers, leading to undetected issues that can cause delays.

Accountability Issues and Project Integrity Cooperation

It was observed that project directors and other responsible individuals often lack accountability, with negligence leading to delays and legal follow-ups that extend project timelines. Additionally, corruption and fraudulent practices undermine project management, causing the false allocation of resources and delaying the projects, while long land acquisition processes further impede the beginning and subsequent phases.

The project's overall success and sustainability

The findings highlighted that delays in land acquisition can significantly postpone project timelines. This increased costs and resource allocation issues. Ultimately, prolonged land acquisition hampered the project's overall success and sustainability.

Financial Disruptions

If funding is not allocated satisfactorily, it can lead to work stoppages and increasing timelines. Respondent also noted that delays in hiring necessary staff can leave projects understaffed, causing bottlenecks and further delays.

Delayed Project Approval diminished overall project activities

Delayed project approvals can severely disrupt overall actions by interfering with the planned timeline. The study indicated that postponed approvals lead to delays in project tasks, impeding effective resource allocation and complicating the smooth progression of the project.

Transforming Rehabilitation: The Impact on Infrastructure Projects

The study revealed that when any project is delayed, particularly road infrastructure projects, it prevents the community from reaping the benefits of the road network. Additionally, some parts of the road may get damaged before the entire project is completed, necessitating another project to rehabilitate these sections to ensure the network's benefits are realized.

Missed Deadlines & Budget Overruns

Inadequate contract types resulted in disputes in procurement, affected timelines, and costs the respondent replied. If contractors do not adhere to

agreed timelines, it can lead to overall project delays, causing a domino effect on other scheduled tasks. Fluctuations in prices can lead to budget overruns, forcing project managers to reassess timelines based on available resources.

Undesirable interference and stress on Internal Resources

Another substantial result was that politicians and members of parliament directly control local government projects, creating obstacles for development and troublesome the implementation process. Furthermore, project delays lead to cost accelerations and waste of public funds, while externally funded projects incur extra interest costs if not completed on time, engaging stress on internal funds.

Overall, the findings reveal that the results of the projects delay in Bangladesh often encounter a range of challenges that can significantly delay timelines, increase costs, and compromise overall project quality. Each issue identified can lead to compounded delays, budget overruns, and quality concerns, emphasizing the importance of thorough planning and proactive management in project implementation.

Effective Strategies/Corrective Measures to Prevent Project Delays

To reduce the backlog of project implementation and ensure timely completion, comprehensive design, and thorough research are necessary. Each year, IMED monitors and evaluates completed projects, providing suggestions for future ones. The study's findings suggest that adopting updated technologies like 'Blockchain' and amending necessary government policies such as the 'land acquisition policy' could enhance project implementation.

An expert project organization team, achievable planning documents, certain project allocations, and value-for-money procurement are indispensable for success. In addition, need-based project selection, corruption-free online procurement, political impartiality in decision-making, and improved contract management through training programs are vital for confirming timely and fruitful project completion. Based on the study's findings, the section on effective strategies to prevent project delays includes the following areas of focus.

Corrective measures in the Pre-Approval /Feasibility Stage

Apply a Structured Planning Framework & maintain Robust Feasibility Study Protocols.

Adopting a consistent planning outline can ensure project outlines and timelines, while project management tools help clearer communication and task tracking. Establishing strong feasibility study procedures allows for a thorough analysis of possible risks and challenges before project initiation.

Comprehensive Pre-study Assessments

Integrating comprehensive pre-study assessments can help identify gaps in resources and capabilities. This includes stakeholder consultations, environmental impact assessments, and technology evaluations to ensure all factors are considered before moving forward.

Addressing Personnel Shortages

Creating a strategic hiring plan to recruit additional personnel and manpower from the finance division will alleviate shortages and ensure the smooth execution of all works is adequately equipped to handle project demands.

Staff Training and Resource Allocation

Investing in training programs for existing staff and ensuring adequate personnel are available can significantly improve project outcomes. Additionally, hiring specialized consultants can bring the necessary expertise to the team, enhancing overall project preparedness.

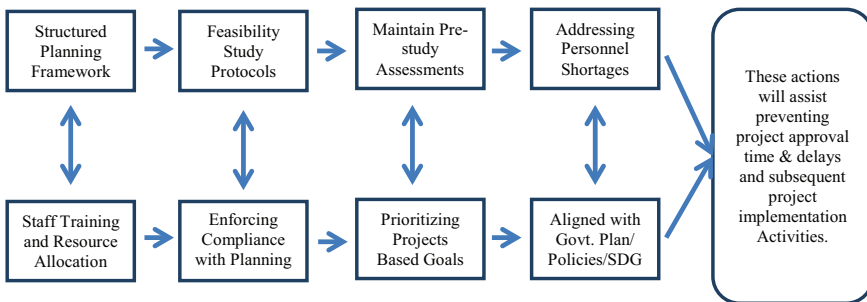


Figure 4: Conceptual Framework to Remove Obstacles in the Pre-Project Approval Phases

Enforcing Compliance with Planning Guidelines

Regularly reviewing and enforcing compliance with planning guidelines will help ensure that all project activities align with established protocols, reducing the risk of oversight.

Prioritizing Projects Based on Strategic Goals

Establishing a clear prioritization process for projects based on organizational objectives will ensure that critical initiatives receive the attention and resources they require, aligning efforts with overall strategic goals.

Strategies/corrective measures in the Project Approval Stages

Rationalize Administrative Processes & enhance Planning Effectiveness

Rationalization of administrative processes through direct and automated

systems can significantly reduce delays in project approval and enhance communication while minimizing paperwork. Respondents asserted that online submission of technical project proposals (TPPs) or development project proposals (DPPs) to the Planning Commission or Ministry can improve planning and administrative ability.

Expedite manpower approval & address approval process challenges

Obtaining manpower approval from the finance division is crucial before submitting the DPP or TPP to the Planning Commission. Engaging reliable personnel and having a well-trained team to professionally manage submissions and respond to queries can significantly reduce delays and confirm a smoother approval procedure.

Ensure Compliance and Quality in Project Submissions

Implementing high-quality development project proposal (DPP) submissions ensures compliance, enabling smooth appraisal processes and supports the approval authority. The following conceptual models outline potential strategies facilitate quicker approvals and ensure a smoother transition to project execution.

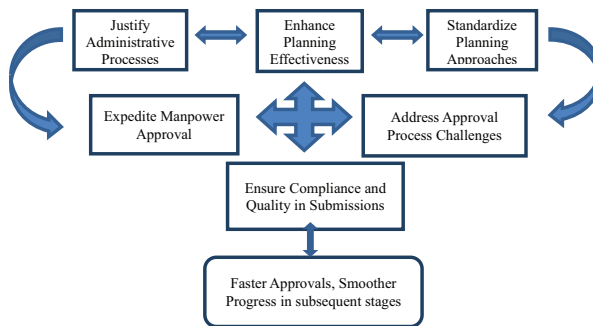


Figure 5: Conceptual Framework to Eliminate Complications in the Project Approval Periods

Plans/facilitative measures in the Project Implementation Stages

To address the numerous issues identified in the project implementation stages, a multifaceted approach is required. Improving the tendering process can streamline submissions, ensuring clarity and efficiency while reducing bureaucratic delays. Additionally, implementing a planned change management protocol and securing sufficient funding through contingency budgeting will help manage changes and address financial shortfalls, ensuring resource availability throughout the project life-cycle.

Upgrade Tools and Technology

To improve operational efficiency, evaluate the necessary tools and technology and then invest in new, current equipment. Since local government projects involve all structure-based operations, contemporary technology can support the projects' smooth operation.

Rationalize the Tendering Process & optimize procurement practices

Justifying the tendering process during project implementation involves establishing clear and standardized processes to improve transparency and efficiency. According to respondents, reviewing and improving procurement contracts can reduce issues with contractor performance, ultimately optimizing procurement practices to ensure that projects run smoothly.

Enhance Coordination with all stakeholders.

To control prospects and manage delays related to contractor performance and material availability, stakeholders should interconnect more effectively. Also, establishing clear roles and responsibilities assists decision-making processes, consenting quicker resolutions to challenges that may arise during implementation.

Develop Strong Monitoring Systems

Implementing resilient monitoring tools and evaluation outlines is crucial for actual oversight and timely issue identification in development projects. Strengthening the capacities of the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) can address its limitations, enabling more accurate duties and assisting required remedial actions.

Address Land Acquisition Challenges

Completing land acquisition before the project start can reduce needless delays during implementation. This practical approach shortens the workflow and boosts overall project efficiency, permitting smoother moves and faster delivery of development outcomes.

Foster Ethical Practices

The respondents clearly stated that establishing clear policies and accountability processes is vital for combating fraud and corruption in project accomplishment. By defining strict guidelines and oversight mechanisms, LGED can uphold transparency and integrity in contractor agreements. The following conceptual models provide a structured framework that enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of project implementation.

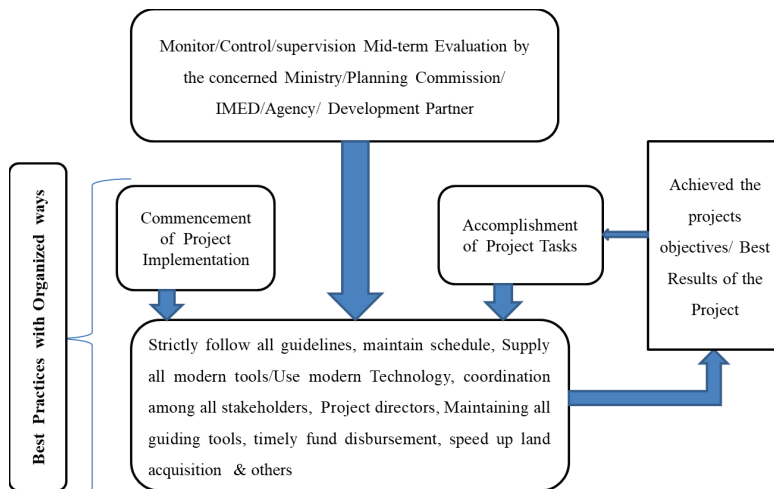


Figure 6: Conceptual model to root out impediments in the Project implementation period

Discussion

This section examines the key challenges in local government projects that include inadequate planning, incomplete feasibility studies, lengthy administrative processes, inefficient project staffing, insufficient contractor skills, and poor scheduling. Respondents consistently highlighted project management issues such as cost, time, and quality, aligning with secondary sources that cite political pressure, lack of baseline surveys, and environmental factors like severe weather as contributing to delays. Additional factors, including scope variances, reduced expenditure, and complications in land acquisition, further exacerbate cost acceleration, while incompetent supervision and construction defects are cited as direct causes of project setbacks.

The analysis revealed that project delays arise not only from failures to meet timelines but also from design modifications during implementation and many changes in project management. These delays destructively impact the progress of the ADP, decreasing controlling efficiency and finally wasting public funds, which aligns with previous research indicating that inexperienced contractors and poor contracts can make complex challenges in project performance.

Overall, the study underscores the complexities involved in implementing local government projects, which are often more intricate than those managed by other ministries. It provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges faced during project execution, highlighting critical factors such as the necessity for

thorough feasibility studies and streamlined administrative processes. Addressing these planning obstacles and enhancing project duration management is essential for improving the effectiveness of development initiatives in Bangladesh.

Recommendations

To mitigate and manage delays in local government division projects in Bangladesh, the following recommendations could significantly enhance project implementation and improve overall management. Additionally, these recommendations may serve as key areas for further research and action.

- Detailed expenditure of all salary, equipment, land acquisition, price, and physical contingency may be ensured before starting the work.
- The local government division should confirm the fund sources. All procurement should be done within the shortest possible time as per procurement rules after budget allocation. Again, tendering and rate schedule aspects should be updated.
- Projects may be formulated after detailed design and precise research. Besides, projects may be settled based on the design, consultants, specialist sub-consultants, and contractors before starting the project.
- The specialist project management team, attainable projected document development, and adequate allocation may be a useful way for successful project completion.
- Every project director and all staff of the project have to be more aware of their role and responsibilities.
- Land acquisition must be completed before project work begins, and political considerations should be addressed before the feasibility stage, not the implementation stages. In addition, a practical map for land acquisition is to be developed.
- Project design and specifications should remain unchanged throughout the implementation phase to ensure consistency and effectiveness.
- To ensure transparency and accountability, all the project personnel should hold vast knowledge about the procurement, tender packages, and bidding documents to avoid future dispute.
- The planning commission and other agencies should practice independent work without external influence. In addition, the sector division of the Planning Commission should reduce appraisal time.

- All the stakeholders have to work as a team to ensure the achievement of some project. Proper education and skills expansion of project workers may be made accessible to send the outputs.
- A trained project directors pool, capable project teams, need-based project selection, and formulation, guaranteeing allocation of corrupt-free online procurement may be the possible solution.
- Reality-based project plans and detailed design may be considered to avoid the risk.
- The local government projects should be free from political influence.
- The people who are linked with project development, approval, and implementation (Supervision and contractor) are required to be expert, trustworthy, and sincere.

Conclusion

Bangladesh has progressed from being a lower-income country to a lower-middle-income country, advancing through socioeconomic development and striving for economic stability through development projects. The successful execution of these projects is crucial for national progress, with the local government division playing a key role in ensuring balanced development across the country. Despite significant public investment by the Bangladeshi government through the local government division for the country's welfare, project delays remain a persistent issue. This study investigates the real impact of project delays, consequences, and remedial measures from the perspective of respondents.

Delays in projects negatively affect local development. Since local government projects are implemented at the grassroots level, delays mean ordinary people lose out on their benefits and quality of work. When construction projects are delayed, the estimated costs can significantly differ from the actual costs, creating issues for future project phases.

Overall, this research illuminated the project management landscape in Bangladesh by focusing on implementation challenges, their impacts, and essential actions needed to address delays in local government projects. By recognizing the basic causes of these delays and suggesting effective management tactics for timely completion, the study not only meets its objectives but also establishes a framework for future research aimed at enhancing public capital management and ensuring the speedy implementation of local government projects in Bangladesh.

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