

Report of the PD on Progress of Work of SDNP and Follow-up of the Decisions of the Steering Committee

- i) The Terms of Reference (TOR) of the Steering Committee has been amended by incorporating the additional points suggested in the standard format of the TOR of the SDNP and the suggestions put forward by UNDP Mission regarding financial sustainability of the project (Annex-1).
- ii) Inception Workshop was held on July 04, 1999 and the Inception Report has been hosted at the SDNP web site under the documents head.
- iii) The original PIP is at the final modification stage as per recent recommendations of two workshops organized by the PMU to include Result Oriented Monitoring Indicators (ROMI) and Logical Framework Analysis (LFA). Once done, this will be presented to the Chairperson, Steering Committee for his consent, before submission to the UNDP and the PMU.
- iv) Regarding extension of the network outside of Dhaka, as per suggestion of the Steering Committee, Bangladesh Agriculture University (BAU) at Mymensingh has recently been visited to explore the possibility of institutional collaboration and installation of the first regional node at BAU. Since the Pilot Phase (PP) of the project is still not complete due to inordinate delays in equipment procurement by UNDP, the establishment of the first regional node at BAU will be taken up in earnest once the installation of all necessary hardware at the Central node is completed. In the mean time, however, SDNP shall continue the initial discussion for arrangements for premises and other facilities with BAU.
- v) The project budget has been modified in line with the amended draft PIP and practical implementation experience so far. The budget has been submitted to the UNDP in August 2000.
- vi) Recruitment of Project Coordinator: Advertisements had been published on three occasions in daily newspapers as suitable candidates were not found. Finally, an Interview Board consisting of four members including the Project Director, SDNP, representative, UNDP, representative, PMU and a resource person, namely, Dr. Siddque Hossain, Director, Computer Centre, BUET was formed. The Interview Board met and interviewed the candidates (the PMU representative could not attend due to other pressing matters) on 22nd November, 1999 and chose Mr. Hakikur Rahman as Project Coordinator for SDNP. He joined service on 15th of December, 2000.
- vii) Recruitment of Management Consultant:- The same advertisements as for the Project Coordinator included vacancy announcement for the Management Consultants for Business Plan and the Needs and Resources Assessment. The Interview Board was composed of PD, SDNP, representative of UNDP, representative of PMU and Dr. Rahim Baksh Talukder from IBA, DU as the resource person. The interview took place on 17th November, 1999. and Mr. Partha Pratim Sarkar was chosen as the Management Consultant (Needs and Resources). No candidate was found suitable for preparing Business Management Plan. Mr. Partha Pratim Sarkar joined his duties on 15th December, 1999.
- viii) Needs and Resources Assessment Study:- The workshop by the Management Consultant (Needs and Resources Assessment) was held on April 8, 2000 where his report was presented. On the basis of the comments received, the report was finalised. While the report still needs some final editorial changes, for general access, it has been uploaded to our web site.

- ix) Hosting of BIDS web site:- Web site of the BIDS (<http://www.bids-bd.org>) has been hosted through Bangladesh Online Ltd. as per recommendations made by the UNDP Mission in October 1999. The design and development of the web page was been done by the Web designer Consultant.
- x) Hosting of SDNP web site:- Web site of the SDNP (<http://www.sdnbd.org>) has been hosted through Bangladesh Online Ltd. in February 2000 and this has also been done as per recommendations made by the UNDP Mission. The design and development was initially done by the SDNP web designer recruited for the purpose and later improvements have been done by the SDNP team as a whole along with the UNV who joined in April 2000. This web page has recently topped ranking among all the 52 SDNPs around the globe (Annex-2/1-9).
- xi) Recruitment of Assistant Systems Administrator and Web Designer:- The vacancy announcement was posted in SDNP web site and the URL has been published in daily newspapers. Of the 12 applicants, 6 were interviewed by the Selection Committee as approved by the Steering Committee. It consisted of the PD, SDNP Coordinator, One representative from PMU and one representative from UNDP. The Selection Committee approved a panel of 3 candidates and from them one joined as the Assistant Systems Administrator and one as the Web Designer since July 1, 2000.
- xii) BIDS LAN:- Installation and operation of BIDS LAN has been completed by April 2000 and now the LAN is operating satisfactorily with more than 60 researchers and staff.
- xiii) Training of BIDS personnel:- SDNP personnel offered necessary training to the personnel of BIDS computer unit and eventually all of the researchers and staffs of BIDS have been given preliminary training on email and Internet.
- xiv) Training of SDNP personnel:- In December 1999, the EDP Manager of BIDS and LAN Consultant of SDNP had a five days of intensive training on Linux and later on as per suggestion of the Chairperson of Steering Committee a schedule of a thorough training programme has been developed with BUET on Linux, Server Administration, Firewall, Sendmail, etc. and justifying the cost-benefit-resource potentials. BUET has been selected as the training venue. Since August 26, 2 SDNP personnel and 4 BIDS computer personnel are on training in BUET.

A) Achievements:

1. Setting up of the BIDS LAN:- Discussed earlier.
2. Hosting of BIDS Web site:- Discussed earlier.
3. Hosting of SDNP Web site:- Discussed earlier.
4. Connectivity to 24 SIAs of SEMP including the NPD and PMU (with more than one connectivity), except ADAB and CAMPE because technical difficulties of the organisations.
5. The Cyber Cafe (Tele-Centre) in the premises of BIDS, has started operation since late July. Three computers have been put there and will be raised to five if there is demand.
6. Report on Needs and Resources Assessment has been hosted in the SDNP Web site.

7. Web pages for SIAs and Non-SIAs:- As per TOR of SDNP, it has started developing separate web sites for all SIA components and as part of the activity, initial development of the web site for three SIAs has already been completed. They are PMU, Waste Concern and BUP. At present these web sites are hosted in SDNP's local server and after completion of official formalities including payment of hosting charges they would be hosted in USA-based servers.

B) Storage of Information

Storage of information regarding sustainable development has started in full swing after recruitment of a Research Officer from August 01, 2000. These information have been organised into 52 different categories (Annex-3/1-5). Currently, all internet sources are being explored and eventually other national and international data sources will be tapped for storage in the SDNP server.

C) Observing National and International Days

SDNP has started to host news and information about important national and international days of significance in relation to sustainable development in SDNP web site, where messages from national and international leaders have been posted along with detail of the day's activities. On June 5, 2000 for example, SDNP Bangladesh hosted the day's activities with messages from the national leaders and UN leaders.

D) National and International Events of Importance

SDNP has decided to post information related to major events and news of significance related to sustainable development. The information on "Save Buriganga Movement" and on "Dengue" have been hosted. Problem is while news on international events can be obtained from the Internet, we want to put more emphasis on national events information on which are not readily available well before hand. Cooperaion of all is sought in this regard.

E) Visit of SDNP Coordinator to SDNP HQ

The PD and the Project Coordinator of SDNP planned to visit SDNP, Jamaica and on way back, the SDNP HQ in New York as recommended earlier by UNDP Mission. Unfortunately, the Government refused permission to the PD for the visit and the Project Coordinator alone visited the SDNP HQ in July 2000. The visit was very fruitful for the project and helped a lot in sorting out many important issues for smooth operation of the project (Report in Annex-4/1-3).

F) Future Strategies

A Strategic Meeting was held on August 07, 2000 and several important issues were discussed in the meeting. The following were decided on principle. Steering Committee may give its views/recommendations on these issues.

1. Popularising the Cyber Cafe:- To popularise and obtain optimum benefit from the Cyber Cafe, a list of all schools in Dhaka has been collected. SDNP is in the process of collection of the address of these schools from the Dhaka Education Board. After collecting their addresses, letters will be issued offering internet facilities to school students and eventually to college and university students. A special day in a week will be dedicated to the students of non-formal programmes organized by different NGOs working in the slum areas of Dhaka.

2. Sustainable Development Information (SDI):- As discussed earlier, a Research Officer has been engaged in downloading information on sustainable development divided into 52 categories and by the end of September 2000, one short term consultant is expected to be recruited for the database management purposes for looking after the collection and initial management of the information. Once, these are in some shape, a Data base manger and a Database Programmer with knowledge in ORACLE would be recruited during January 2001. This SDI page would be given direct link to the SDNP web page with a special button, so that any person browsing our web site could directly access our database through the hot button.
3. Institutional Collaboration:- If there are suitable opportunities for activities through institutional collaborations in the line of SDNP, these will be explored without hindering the main stream activities of SDNP.
4. Upgraded Connectivity:- In this respect integration of indiginuos technologies along with the available latest low technologies are being though of and exploring the existing global market including the local one for optimum utilization of resources. Few suggestions are put forwarded;
 - Dial-up connectivity- This type of connectivity would serve the primary purpose of the project using existing the Nation Wide Dialing (NWD) telephone network.
 - VSAT Link- Regional node at Khulna is located in the vicinity of Bay of Bengal and situated at around 300Km away from the central node of SDNP. It is suggested that the dial-up connectivity between Dhaka and Khulna could be replaced by a 64 Kbps VSAT link, established independently in Khulna to accommodate enhanced volume of data flow.
 - Broadband Link- A more recently available technology much cheaper than VSAT, leased line and other available high bandwidth connectivity would be introduced at the central node enhancing traffic between regional nodes.
 - Microwave Link- Connectivity between Dhaka, Rajshahi, Barisal and Sylhet could be replaced by either microwave link or any other low cost connectivity available by the end of year 2001.
 - Fiber Optics- Bangladesh Railway (BR) has an underutilized fiber optics backbone running between Dhaka and Chittagong. The project would like to utilize a leased bandwidth through collaboration between BR and Grameen Communications.
 - Ethernet Wireless- Ethernet wireless cards could be used to connect important agencies working in the field of sustainable development in and around the central node at Dhaka.

G) Constraints faced

1. A major problem has been telephone lines. SDNP applied for 20 lines in July 1999 and only 5 lines were approved in April 2000. SDNP again applied for 20 more lines and 10 lines have been approved only last month. These have not been put in operation yet as the formalities and physical installation are yet to be done.

Of the five lines, one is for lease line, one is for general use and 3 lines are for dialing-up. Since last Thursday, all lines have been put out of operation at the instruction of BTTB without any reference to SDNP. That means all internet service is off at the moment. While we are exploring the problem, we urge the NPD, PMU and UNDP to take the issue up with the relevant authorities.

2. Procurement Problem:- All equipment are to be procured through the UNDP. The process is long and inordinate delays are endemic. Servers have been received many weeks after the promised time. Even then, some of the necessary peripherals such as modem pools have remained undelivered. If there is one problem behind the delays in achievements of SDNP, the delay in procurement is the real reason. This will delay further the setting up of regional nodes and providing connectivity to the concerned organisations.

Unfortunately, the delays is proving costly. Despite early arrangement of CDVAT through PMU, the clearing agent employed by UNDP failed to clear the air conditioner for the SDNP premise and is now asking for demurrage charges for their failure for no fault of SDNP.

H) Decisions Needed

1. Charges of different services offered by SDNP:- SDNP wishes to levy charges at flat rates sometime in near future (may be before the end of the year) for lon-line connectivity to pay for the lease line charges to keep itself sustainable after the project period is over. A definite proposal would be placed before the Chairperson, Steering Committee, after due consultation with stakeholders.
2. Extended operation of the Cyber Cafe:- Initiatives have been taken to make the Cyber Cafe more popular and effective to meet the needs of general people, particularly the young. It has been observed that additional manpower would be needed to run the Cyber Café, if this has to be a daily affair. Decision regarding this is needed.
3. Observation of National and International Days and Events:- As discussed earlier, it has been found that information on International days and events can easily be obtained from different web sites. For the National days and events, it would help if there could be some sort of information from the respective authority in advance. If the Steering Committee feels that this is a worthwhile activity, We seek help from the PMU and others concerned in this.
4. Revision of the PIP:- The PIP may be vetted by the Chairperson before its final submission.
5. Recruitment of the Database Consultant:- Shortage of skilled personnel is a prevailing fact and for this reason, head-hunting would be needed to locate the proper personnel for the post, rather than conventional recruitment processes through news paper circulation. Approval of the Steering Committee is being sought in this regard. Kindly note that this is the usual practice in BIDS.

ANNEX 1

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE SDNP STEERING COMMITTEE (AMENDED)

The SDNP Steering Committee is an integral part of the overall implementation process of the project. The role of the Steering Committee is to provide advice, direction and support to the SDNP implementing unit (SDNPIU) on an ongoing basis. The Committee will comprise IT specialists as well as representatives of the Government, of the SEMP partners, of the media, of academic/research institutions, of the private sector, and other stakeholders. It should be expanded to include more of the key players in the use of IT for development, education, etc. The Steering Committee thus ensures stakeholder participation in the management and operation of the SDNP, without being directly responsible for any aspects of project implementation such as financial management.

The Committee will seek consensus on decisions, and where consensus is not possible, a majority vote will carry weight with any dissenting notes recorded in the minutes if so desired.

The Chairperson of the Committee will be selected from among the members and will be appointed for a period of two years. The Secretary of the Committee will be the SDNP Administrator from within BIDS. Quorum for a meeting of the Committee is 50 percent of membership and meetings will initially take place quarterly which may later be reduced to half-yearly if SDNP progresses satisfactorily. Extra-ordinary meetings may be called as and when necessary.

Even though the Steering Committee does not have direct responsibility for financial management, it should leave some knowledge of the financial status of project activities. In the workplan (detailed) presented annually, the proposed budget for the year (to be approved by UNDP and the PMU), should be included. In addition, there should be consideration of IT Demo/Multi-Purpose Access Centres, which could be contracted out or be done in collaboration with partners. Bi-annual monitoring reports (with clear indicators, where possible) of use of computers and the Internet for the main SDNP/SEMP network and supported IT demonstrations initiatives should be presented.

The Steering Committee will advise on:

- Plans, activities and achievements with the SDNP Coordinator;
- Long-term planning measures;
- Sustainable operation of the SDN on a non-profit basis;
- Contents of database;
- Policy issues regarding operation of SDN;
- Resolving conflicts between SDN users/members;
- Sensitising and promoting actual and potential user groups;
- Any other relevant issues that may arise from time to time.

**Agenda of the Second Meeting of the Steering Committee to be held on
September 03, 2000**

1. Confirmation of the minutes of the first meeting of the Steering Committee.
2. Report by the Project Director on the progress of work (including follow-up activities)
3. Issues for attention/ decision
4. Miscellaneous