

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

March 28, 2001

- i) Modification of the project budget: Revised budget has been submitted to the UNDP in August 2000 by adopting the exchange rate realignment.
- ii) Press Release: A press release has been sent to national newspapers and obtained broad coverage.
- iii) Inclusion of important non-SIAs: Negotiations are in progress to connect Asiatic Society, Muktijoddha Punorbashan Kendra, Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industries, Shandhani, BMA and several other institutions. But, due to the prevailing situation progress of work has been severely in hindrance.
- iv) Cyber Café at BIDS: Special attentions have been given to the students of the Cyber café and the server has been programmed to filter objectionable sites as per the recommendation. At present students of 10 colleges and institutes are attending the cyber café schedule from 10:00-1:00 p.m. and 2:00-5:00 p.m. with a total of more than 100 students per week.
- v) Events of importance: Direct contacts are being made regarding collection of information during observation of national and international days and regularly they have been hosted in SDNP's web site.
- vi) Additional manpower for SDI: Due to non-availability of fund, progress could not be made in this respect. Data collection, generation and dissemination needed additional research officers and database manager, including database programmers. However, recently the project hosted World Climate Day, World Water Day, World Forest Day and International Women's Day all held in March.
- vii) Data exchange with similar institutes: Collaborational work is in progress.
- viii) Long term plan: A draft plan is in preparation and will be submitted to the Steering Committee after consulting the Chairperson.
- ix) New telephone lines: At present SDNP has five telephone lines and demand note for ten lines have been issued to SDNP. Demand note amount has been submitted and request of fund has been submitted for more ten telephone lines.
- x) Formulation of policy on a "not-for-profit" basis of operation: A draft policy is in preparation.
- xi) Revision of PIP: PIP has been revised and submitted to UNDP for necessary action. The revised PIP is attached with the report.
- xii) Recruitment of Database Consultant: Due to the prevailing problem, the recruitment of a database manager and two database programmer could not be done.

A) Achievements:

1. Preliminary contact and negotiations has been made with BAU.
2. Technical Specifications for the VSAT, main server and other equipment have been done.
3. Several important non-SIAs have been connected to SDNP server by dial up connections.

4. Almost all national and international days have been observed through hosting of new web folders at SDNP web site.
5. Collaboration programmes have been taken in hand to implement School Programme with World Computer Exchange, SDNP HQ and FED and also several other institutional collaboration programmes are in preliminary stage of processing.
6. Web site development for SIAs, important non-SIAs including UNDP projects are in progress.

B) Future Strategies

Much of the work during the last seven months could not be done due to the prevailing situation. However, the project predicts that as soon as the fund releases, the following programmes could be taken at the full swing:

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 and eventually all of them will be contacted in phases. Also, it has been emphasized in the last meeting that a special day in a week should 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):- A Research Officer has been engaged in downloading information on sustainable development divided into 71 categories and due to the problem, a consultant on database management could not be recruited for the database management purposes. SDI page has a separate counter with statistics, so that track of the user of the site could be recorded for in-depth research purpose.
3. Institutional Collaboration:- Several institutional collaboration programme are at the initial stage and at times they will be processed through the Steering Committee.
4. Upgraded Connectivity:- VSAT Link will be established as soon as fund released. Also, provision of broadband link, microwave link, utilization of fiber optics backbone, ethernet wireless and other technical possibilities will be explored.

C) Constraints faced

1. The main problem faced during the last seven month was the non-release of fund and it has put the project in stalemate. Even if the fund were released within the shortest time, it would take at least three months to achieve the accelerated speed again.
2. Procurement Problem:- Unless the procurement process could be expedited rapidly, SDNP will lose expensive man hours of technical expertise engaged in the project.

D) Decisions Needed

1. Operation of SDNP in the prevailing situation:- The Steering Committee could formulate strategies of operation of SDNP in similar situations in future without intervening the project activities.
2. Revision of the PIP:- The revised PIP has been prepared and may be vetted by the Chairperson before its final submission.
3. Closure of the SDNP:- Due to non-release of fund, if the project would be needed to wind up, a policy can be formulated by the Steering Committee.