



Unveiling the Ripple Effects: A Deep Dive into Public Procurement Delays and Stakeholder Impacts in Bangladesh's Upazila Construction Projects

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| <p>Abstract: This research explores the causes of delays in public procurement processes in Bangladesh, focusing on construction projects at the upazila level. Employing a qualitative research methodology, the study aims to understand the public procurement landscape comprehensively. Data is meticulously gathered through structured interviews with key stakeholders, including procurement officials, suppliers, and policymakers, who are integral to the system. The findings reveal that delays in public procurement projects are predominantly caused by financial resource deficiencies, which hinder the timely initiation of projects. Bureaucratic entanglements and issues related to the tendering process are significant impediments to project progress, especially in large-scale ventures. Additionally, the study identifies other significant obstacles, such as workforce shortages and land acquisition complications, which further delay project timelines. The recruitment of consultants, particularly for donor-funded projects, adds another layer of complexity to the project initiation phase. These delays have extensive ramifications, affecting various stakeholders. Procuring authorities face fiscal losses, contractors experience economic hardships, and the general public suffers from disruptions in essential services and daily activities.</p> <p>Keywords: Public Procurement, Project Delay, Stakeholder Impact, Bangladesh, Construction Projects.</p> | <p>Research Paper</p> |
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INTRODUCTION

Public procurement is a multifaceted concept that has been defined variously by experts and scholars. According to Arrowsmith (2010) and Wittig (1999), it represents the governmental process of acquiring goods and services to fulfill developmental objectives or acts as a business mechanism within a political context. McCrudden (2004) emphasizes its role in social regulation, promoting human rights, racial equality, and combating discrimination. From the perspective of Ridwanul Hoque, public procurement involves the governmental acquisition of goods, works, and services via contracts (Hoque, 2012), a sentiment echoed by Mahmood (2010), who sees it as a means of securing procurement opportunities. This paper adopts the definition from the Public Procurement Rule 2008 (PPR-2008), which sees public procurement as the contractual process of acquiring goods, works, and services, emphasizing that it spans from the planning to the successful completion of a project.

The concept of delay in this context is understood as an occurrence where activities extend beyond their expected timeframe (Pickavance, 2005; Trauner *et al.*, 2009), particularly applicable to construction projects within Bangladesh's public procurement sector. A project is considered delayed if it does not meet its scheduled completion set by the procuring entity. Koopmans (2011) suggests that indicators of project completion, such as work quality, adherence to contract specifications, and budget utilization, serve as performance measures.

In Bangladesh, public procurement is a critical discussion point concerning government operations, guided by legal procurement frameworks established in 2006 (Mahmood, 2010). The evolving nature of public procurement presents significant challenges in project implementation, notably due to delays. Such delays have considerable implications for the country's socioeconomic development, with research suggesting that reducing procurement delays by ten percent could boost GDP by 0.5 percent (The Daily Star, November 2, 2015). Delays negatively impact project outcomes and

can lead to outright failure (Alam, 2010). Given Bangladesh's demographic and economic constraints, repeated delays exert undue pressure on the national budget, limiting funding for essential public projects, impeding service delivery, and obstructing annual progress (World Bank, 2002). Furthermore, these delays adversely affect the populace, exacerbating economic, social, and everyday hardships due to the lack of necessary services (Khan *et al.*, 2016).

However, the study's rationale lies in critically examining the delays in public procurement projects, which have significant consequences for the procuring authorities, contractors, and the general public. The study seeks to identify the causes and consequences of these delays, focusing on the financial, bureaucratic, and operational challenges contributing to the problem. By understanding the intricacies of these delays, the study aims to provide insights into the potential solutions and strategies that can help streamline the public procurement process and mitigate the adverse impacts on all stakeholders involved.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The scholarly landscape is rich with studies addressing various dimensions of public procurement, encompassing project management themes in the public sector, the economic and legal frameworks guiding public procurement, and empirical research on the delays in public projects and their ramifications. Kaming *et al.*, (1997) undertook a seminal study titled "Factors Influencing Construction Time and Cost Overruns on High-rise Projects in Indonesia," analyzing thirty-one high-rise construction endeavors. Their findings highlighted design alterations, diminished labor productivity, insufficient planning, and resource scarcity as primary contributors to project delays. Concurrently, Chan and Kumaraswamy (1997) conducted a comparative examination of time overruns in Hong Kong's construction sector, identifying inadequate risk management, unexpected site conditions, sluggish decision-making processes, client-driven design changes, and frequent modifications to work plans as critical delay factors. The juxtaposition of these studies reveals diverse causative factors for delays in construction projects across different Southeast Asian contexts and overlaps in planning and decision-making challenges, thereby enriching our understanding of delay causation in Bangladesh's construction projects.

Further exploration by Al-Khalil and Al Ghafly (1999) in their investigation "Important Causes of Delay in Public Utility Projects in Saudi Arabia" underscores the adverse impacts of procurement delays on all project stakeholders, including clients, contractors, and designers. These impacts encompass revenue losses due to the absence of operational facilities, escalated overheads, and increased materials and labor costs. Similarly, Aibinu and Jagboro (2002), in their analysis of the Nigerian construction industry, "The Effects of

Construction Delays on Project Delivery in Nigerian Construction Industry," enumerate six detrimental outcomes of project delay: time and cost overruns, disputes, and complete project abandonment. Notably, the Nigerian context presents a unique challenge with violent disputes stemming from construction delays.

Ojokuku and Obasan (2011), in their study "Time Management and Organizational Performance: A Causal Analysis" conducted within Nigeria's southwest geopolitical zone, revealed the criticality of time management for enhancing service delivery and overall project excellence. They advocate for establishing stringent project timelines and creating oversight bodies to ensure adherence to these schedules.

In Bangladesh, Islam *et al.*, (2015) delved into the delays encountered in large building projects, identifying key stakeholders as the owners, consultants, and contractors. Through a comprehensive questionnaire survey, their research unveiled seventy-nine significant factors contributing to construction delays. Among these, the inexperience of construction managers, selection of the lowest bids, funding shortages, site-related constraints, flawed planning and scheduling, contractors' burdensome workloads, inadequate project management, lack of skilled labor, and escalating material costs emerged as paramount concerns. Although this study provides valuable insights into the causes of delays in large-scale construction projects in Bangladesh, it does not explicitly address the nuances of public procurement in these projects or the broader implications of such delays. Despite extensive research on the causes and impacts of delays in construction projects across various countries, there remains a notable gap in understanding how these delays specifically affect the efficiency and effectiveness of public procurement processes within the context of developing nations. Furthermore, the existing literature largely overlooks the long-term socio-economic consequences of these delays on the broader community and national development goals.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research methodology employed in this study was deeply rooted in qualitative research principles. The primary goal was to understand the intricacies surrounding delays in public procurement construction projects. This approach was chosen to capture the depth and complexity of the issues, which are often not fully understood through quantitative methods alone.

Data Collection

To ensure a diverse and comprehensive pool of information, data collection relied on both primary and secondary sources:

- **Primary Data:** Meticulously gathered through detailed interviews and direct field observations from December 2022 to February 2023. This hands-

on approach allowed for collecting rich, contextual data directly from the field.

- **Secondary Data:** Supplemented the primary data with an extensive review of existing literature, including newspapers, books, academic journals, periodicals, official reports, and relevant government documents. This provided a broader context and helped triangulate the findings from primary data.

Sampling Strategy

A careful and deliberate purposive sampling strategy was employed to select respondents from Mithapukur Upazila. This non-probability sampling technique was chosen for its ability to provide insightful, critical, and reliable information relevant to the study's objectives. The selection of key informants was strategic, aiming to capture various perspectives and experiences related to project delays. The key informants included:

- A local engineer from the LGED department
- Two contractors involved in public projects under the Mithapukur Upazila Parishad
- Two members of the tender evaluation committee (TEC) from the same parishad
- A headteacher from a secondary school within the upazila

Data Collection Methods

- **Interviews:** These were conducted using a set of open-ended questions carefully designed to elicit in-depth responses. This method enriched the qualitative data by allowing respondents to share their experiences and insights freely.
- **Site Visits:** Integral to the study, these visits to various construction projects within Mithapukur Upazila allowed for direct observation of the impacts of delays. These observations facilitated the development of detailed case studies that vividly illustrate the consequences of delays on stakeholders involved in public procurement construction projects.

Ethical Considerations

Several measures were implemented to ensure the integrity and ethical standards of the research. These measures included securing permission from relevant authorities for access to the study sites, ensuring the voluntary participation of all respondents, and rigorously maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of the information provided. This methodological approach underscores the study's commitment to reliability, ethical conduct, and the generation of valuable insights into the challenges and implications of delays in public procurement projects.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Causes of Delay in Public Procurement Projects Funding Shortages and Project Initiation Delays

One of the most prominent obstacles in public procurement projects is inadequate funding, which often results in delays during the initiation phase. This challenge is further exacerbated when contractors, having won tenders, cannot commence work due to procuring authorities' delayed disbursement of funds. The complexity of accessing funds, particularly in large projects financed through foreign loans, can significantly stall progress. The dependency on donor organizations' approval, which requires authorization from their respective governing bodies, often turns local offices into mere 'post boxes' unable to make autonomous decisions, thereby contributing to the delays.

Bureaucratic and Tendering Complications

The complexities of bureaucratic processes and the tendering system often influence the delays in public procurement projects. These intricacies can significantly reduce project delays by slowing the procurement cycle. Moreover, the study highlights a lack of proactive planning within ministries, leading to document preparation delays. This lack of foresight and preparedness further exacerbates the delays in project initiation. Additionally, the onset of the monsoon season compounds these delays, significantly impacting the commencement of projects. The combination of bureaucratic hurdles, inadequate planning, and external factors like weather conditions can impede the timely execution of public procurement projects, underscoring the need for more efficient processes and better preparedness to mitigate these delays.

Workforce and Land Availability Issues

The availability of skilled labor and the acquisition of necessary land are critical factors impacting the timeliness of public procurement projects (He, Milne, and Ataullah, 2023). Inadequate staffing in government offices at both central and local levels hinders project execution, as field officers are often tasked with diverse responsibilities, including administrative tasks and development project oversight, which contribute to decreased productivity and project delays.

The issue of land unavailability, particularly for long bridge and road construction in Upazilas, is a significant challenge that leads to further delays in project implementation. Rising land prices often exacerbate this challenge, which makes land acquisition more difficult and expensive. The government sometimes leases the land, and a private developer or operator performs on-site infrastructure development while the government develops off-site infrastructure. However, challenges such as erosion by waves, construction of breakwaters, and land acquisition can still hinder project progress.

Challenges in Consultant Recruitment

In public procurement projects, recruiting domestic and international consultants is a crucial step that often poses challenges and delays. These consultants are vital in providing technical expertise, oversight, and guidance to contractors throughout the project's execution. The challenges are particularly pronounced in the case of donor-funded projects, where the recruitment of consultants is subject to additional layers of approval and clearance from donor agencies. These agencies often have specific terms and conditions that must be met before a consultant can be appointed, which can extend the recruitment process significantly. The complexity of international tender processes also adds to the delays in appointing international consultant groups. These processes involve multiple stages of bidding, evaluation, and negotiation, which can take several months to complete.

Additionally, international consultant groups must obtain permission from their respective governments to participate in foreign projects, adding yet another layer of bureaucracy and delay. These challenges can have significant consequences for public procurement projects, leading to delays in project implementation, increased costs, and reduced efficiency. To address these challenges, it is essential to streamline the recruitment process for domestic and international consultants while ensuring that all necessary approvals and clearances are obtained promptly and efficiently. This may involve implementing more efficient and transparent tender processes, establishing clear guidelines and procedures for consultant recruitment, and fostering closer collaboration between donor agencies, governments, and consultant groups. This detailed exploration of the causes behind delays in public procurement projects underscores the multifaceted challenges, ranging from financial and bureaucratic hurdles to workforce limitations and land acquisition issues. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort to streamline processes, enhance inter-agency collaboration, and ensure timely resource allocation to mitigate the adverse impacts of these delays on project delivery and overall socio-economic development.

The Impact of Delays in Public Procurement on Construction Projects and Stakeholders

Public procurement processes are integral to developing and maintaining infrastructure, which is crucial in delivering essential services to the community. However, delays in these processes can have far-reaching consequences for the immediate parties involved and the broader public. The stakeholders in a public procurement process can be broadly categorized into three groups: the procuring authority (service provider), the contractor (service implementer), and the general public (service receivers). These groups face distinct challenges and adverse effects due to procurement delays.

Procuring Authority: Bureaucratic Complexities and Budgetary Losses

The procuring authority overseeing the entire procurement process often encounters bureaucratic hurdles that can lead to significant delays. These delays may result in budgetary overruns as projects extend beyond their planned timelines, straining public resources and affecting the overall efficiency of service delivery.

This study reveals that delays in projects not only escalate costs for the procuring entities and the government but also lead to a cycle of inefficiencies. When projects are delayed or contractors fail to complete them on schedule, re-tendering becomes necessary. Despite these setbacks, the project's budget does not adjust to accommodate these changes; the following contractor must adhere to the original financial plan, even as material costs rise. Consequently, contractors often use inferior-quality materials to stay within budget, adversely affecting construction projects' longevity and durability. As a result, these projects suffer from early damage, decreased usability, and increased need for repairs, compelling authorities to allocate significant funds for maintenance. This leads to a cost surge and impacts the annual development budget, ultimately hindering national progress.

Occasionally, delays necessitate that authorities revise the project's estimated costs and allocate additional funds to ensure its completion. However, this process is often lengthy and bureaucratic, further prolonging the project's timeline and increasing costs. Moreover, delays may result in legal disputes between the procuring authority and contractors, leading to additional financial losses due to litigation fees.

The delay in the public procurement project has led to a rise in unnecessary administrative expenses. These include costs related to re-tendering, re-advertising, conducting additional meetings, and disseminating crucial notices and correspondences. The authority is responsible for all these financial burdens. Sometimes, a project may need to be sent to tender multiple times, with office maintenance expenses accruing until completion. Moreover, each meeting incurs operational costs, such as honorariums for participants and the provision of refreshments (Mesbahul Kabir, personal communication, January 29, 2023).

When a public procurement project faces delays necessitating a retender, bureaucratic complexity escalates significantly. Finalizing a retender involves reestimating project costs, meticulously reviewing the procurement area, identifying the reasons for the delay, and compiling a detailed report. However, this step is not the conclusion; the relevant ministry determines any additional budgetary allocations required upon reviewing and approving the report.

The project was expected to conclude smoothly, yet it encountered a delay, necessitating the navigation through four critical stages. This delay further compounded the bureaucratic complexities of the public project. A tender evaluation committee (TEC) member at the Mithapukur Upazila LGED office highlighted that the process requires approval from a dozen government departments. Additionally, numerous meetings at both local and national levels are essential to advance a single project through this intricate procedure (Diponkor Talukdar, personal communication, February 12, 2023).

Due to repeated procrastination during the implementation stage, there is a pressing need for a time extension, a process that introduces another layer of complexity. Initially, the contractor must formally apply for an extension to the procuring authority, outlining the reasons for the delay and the additional time needed. The local procuring entity, which oversees the project's execution, has the authority to grant a one-time extension based on the application's merits. However, the process becomes significantly more complicated should the project require further extensions beyond this initial grant. At this stage, obtaining ministerial approval is mandatory, involving a thorough review of the progress, the reasons for the continued delays, and an assessment of the implications of granting additional time. This level of bureaucratic involvement is more complex and considerably more time-consuming, inevitably causing further delays. In this intricate scenario, delay begets further delay, creating a cycle that can be challenging to break (Diponkor Talukdar, personal communication, February 12, 2023).

The contractor finds it increasingly challenging to supply the necessary paperwork and articulate the rational explanations behind the project's delay. This process entails the request circulating through multiple offices, each adding its layer of scrutiny before it finally reaches the ministry level, where a decision regarding a further extension can be made. Consequently, a delayed public procurement project disrupts timelines and significantly amplifies bureaucratic complexity at the ministerial level, introducing additional hurdles and inefficiencies into the system. This complex web of bureaucracy thus complicates matters further, slowing down the progress of projects already behind schedule.

The delay in construction projects significantly increases the workload of procuring officials, making their jobs more challenging and time-consuming. When a project encounters delays, the immediate response of the procuring entity is to send an official warning letter to the contractor to understand the reasons behind the setback. This initial communication is critical in establishing accountability. However, if the contractor fails to respond to this initial correspondence, the officials are compelled to escalate the situation by sending the warning letter a second time (Majumdar Khalek, personal communication, January 29, 2023).

Persistence in communication is critical; thus, if there is still no response from the contractor after the second attempt, the officials send a third warning letter. This step underscores the seriousness of the situation. Following the unsuccessful attempts to elicit a response through warning letters, the procuring entity takes a more formal approach by issuing a summons against the contractor and the Technical Evaluation Committee (TEC) members. During their meeting, a crucial discussion occurs where a new deadline is set for the project's completion, aiming to mitigate further delays.

Despite these efforts, the procuring authority must thoroughly investigate if the contractor fails to complete the work within the newly allocated timeframe. This investigation aims to uncover the root causes of the delay and determine the contractor's culpability. Suppose the contractor is found guilty of causing the delay in the investigation. In that case, the authority takes the necessary steps to inform the higher authority, recommending that punitive action be taken against the accused contractor.

The repercussions of construction delays are far-reaching. They lead to wasted working hours and prevent officials from dedicating time to their routine tasks. This diversion of focus and resources places additional pressure on the officials, exacerbating their challenges in managing their responsibilities effectively. Such scenarios highlight the complex challenges in managing construction projects and underscore the importance of timely and effective communication and accountability mechanisms to mitigate delays and their associated impacts (Mesbahul Kabir, personal communication on January 29, 2023).

Furthermore, any project paper that experiences delays must undergo a cumbersome process of being transferred from one office to another to gather all the necessary approvals and signatures. This process requires the signatures of all Technical Evaluation Committee (TEC) members, even for decisions about delayed projects that might seem of lesser importance. Consequently, this requirement leads to a significant accumulation of files, creating a backlog that severely disrupts the flow of regular work activities (Probir Saha, personal communication, January 27, 2023).

Local officials have expressed that their workload would be substantially reduced if projects were completed on schedule. If there were no delays, they would have the opportunity to carry out their regular duties with greater ease and relaxation. In contrast, the current situation with delayed projects forces them to apologize to their higher-ups for failings that are not their direct fault. This misperception contributes to a belief among higher officials that the local office staff are not entirely dedicated to their work or are not working to their total capacity. However, the reality is quite the opposite; the local officials are overwhelmed with the

additional burden of managing and trying to rectify the delays in these projects. This situation affects not only their work efficiency but also their professional relationships and the overall productivity of their office.

Contractors: Financial Loss and Cost Overruns

For contractors operating in the construction industry, delays in project timelines are not just inconveniences; they translate directly into significant financial losses. When projects are stalled, whether due to logistical issues, planning oversights, or unforeseen circumstances, the immediate consequence is an increase in the cost of labor. Workers must be compensated for their time, even if the progress is unplanned. Additionally, the materials' prices and the equipment's rental or maintenance costs can escalate over time, leading to substantial cost overruns. This financial strain affects not only the immediate cash flow of the contractors but also their overall economic health and stability (Mortuza Hasan, personal communication, January 30, 2023).

These cost overruns have a cascading effect, often leading to disputes between contractors and clients over who should bear the additional expenses. Such disputes can further delay the project, exacerbating the financial strain on the contractors involved. Moreover, to mitigate these economic losses, contractors might be forced to lower the quality of materials used in the project, which can affect the overall quality and durability of the finished structure.

A significant factor contributing to cost overruns is the lag between the initial cost estimation and the actual implementation of the project. The estimation team usually sets the budget for the project, including the price of materials, one to three years before the project's start date. However, during this period, the market prices for materials can increase significantly due to inflation or changes in supply and demand. Still, the project's budget often remains the same based on the initial estimates. This discrepancy leaves contractors in a predicament where they must either absorb the cost increases or renegotiate contracts, both of which are unfavorable positions that can lead to financial loss.

In such situations, contractors find themselves in a tight spot, needing to balance between maintaining the quality of the project and managing their financial liabilities. The industry needs to find innovative solutions to these challenges, such as more dynamic budgeting models or improved project management strategies, to ensure that projects can be delivered on time, within budget, and without compromising quality.

The engineer appointed by the authority to oversee the project lodged a formal complaint against the contractor, alleging certain discrepancies. In response, the authority took immediate action by withholding the contractor's payment. As a direct consequence of this

action, the contractor found himself in a precarious position, unable to fulfill financial obligations to the laborers and staff who depend on timely wages for their livelihood. Facing this dilemma, the contractors sometimes seek financial solutions outside their immediate resources. This often involves drawing loans from banks at potentially high interest rates to ensure they can pay wages to their labor force. Unfortunately, this not only temporarily solves the cash flow problem but also exacerbates the financial strain on the contractor by adding substantial interest payments, leading to further erosion of capital and deepening their economic woes (Hasanuzzaman, personal communication, January 25, 2023).

The General Public: Disruption of Services and Daily Activities

Arguably, the most affected by delays in public procurement construction projects are the ordinary people—the end recipients of the intended services. Projects to improve public infrastructure, such as roads, educational institutions, and hospitals, are critical for the community's well-being. Delays in these projects can significantly disrupt daily life, limiting access to essential services and negatively impacting the quality of life.

The public ultimately bears the brunt of delays in public procurement, suffering from a lack of adequate services and enduring significant hardship (Akman *et al.*, 2005). An area's socio-economic development is closely tied to its infrastructure (Terluin, 2003). For meaningful improvement in infrastructure, the government must prioritize construction projects. Unfortunately, delays in these projects result in numerous challenges for the people.

The ongoing delays encountered during road construction significantly disrupt the usual flow of transportation systems, leading to increased transportation costs and elevating the price of daily commodities. As a result, tenants and low-income farmers find themselves burdened with excessive costs to meet basic survival needs. This detailed study has uncovered that individuals with limited income in Mithapukur Upazila are particularly hard hit. The disruption causes a ripple effect, where the cost of commodities, especially those not produced locally and thus needing to be bought from the local market, skyrockets. Consequently, these individuals are forced to allocate a substantial portion of their already meager incomes to purchase these necessary goods at much higher prices, exacerbating their financial strain and highlighting a critical concern for local policy and aid interventions (Field observation, March 29, 2017).

On the contrary, when the farmers, the tenants, and the small cottage owners prepare to sell their products, they often face a significant challenge. They do not receive the actual market value of their commodities

due to the absence of proper transportation means. This lack of access forces them into a disadvantaged position, where they are compelled to sell their produce to an intermediary with the necessary transportation capabilities. These intermediaries, often well aware of the farmers' predicaments, exploit the situation to their advantage. They purchase the products at significantly lower prices directly from the villages, where the producers have limited options to negotiate better terms. Subsequently, these intermediaries transport the goods to city markets, selling them at much higher prices, capitalizing on the urban demand for fresh, rural produce. This disparity in the buying and selling prices ensures substantial profits for the intermediaries, often at the expense of the original producers. Consequently, individuals and families relying on small-scale agriculture or cottage industries for their livelihood are in a perpetual cycle of economic disadvantage. The lack of transportation facilities diminishes their immediate earnings and restricts their overall economic growth and ability to invest in better opportunities. Thus, small-income people are constantly deprived and unable to break out of the cycle of poverty, primarily due to the unavailability of transportation facilities that could bridge the gap between rural production and urban markets.

Residents of rural villages have been observed suffering from a lack of adequate, and sometimes even essential, medical treatment. This unfortunate circumstance is often due to prolonged road construction delays, hamper healthcare services' ability to reach these remote areas promptly. The absence of proper infrastructure significantly impacts the health and well-being of these communities, highlighting the critical need for expedited road development to ensure accessible medical care.

Furthermore, an extensive field observation conducted at Hemayetpur in Mithapukur Upazila unveiled a troubling scenario. It was observed that even a slight rainfall causes the roads to be submerged underwater, reminiscent of a flood. This condition has dire consequences for local commerce, compelling adjacent shopkeepers to close their establishments to mitigate losses. In a related incident, a public bus was trapped within a pit puddle in a nearby area, leading to significant traffic congestion that lasted for hours. Consequently, the anticipated improvement in service delivery has become a mere daydream for the residents, significantly impacting their daily lives and mobility. Another revealing case study further illuminates the extent of this issue, highlighting the systemic challenges and the urgent need for infrastructural development in the area.

In the heart of Mithapukur Upazila, the journey from Amtala to Jirani is more akin to navigating a small river than traversing a road. Residents recount that the saga of road maintenance and construction has been a

relentless endeavor spanning over 15 years, yet the situation shows a slight improvement. Geographically cursed, the road sits in a depression, lower than its surroundings, making it a victim to persistent submersion underwater for approximately nine months for the more significant part of the year. This prolonged exposure to water erodes the road's surface and turns it into a breeding ground for mosquitoes and other insects. Occasionally, the stagnant water becomes a source of a foul stench so overpowering that it deters even the most intrepid pedestrians. The health hazards are palpable, with one local shopkeeper lamenting, "Once you walk on this road, you will not only carry the stench with you but also become a host to numerous water-borne diseases, accompanied by relentless itching that spreads across your entire body." The community's frustration is palpable, with a collective yearning for the day when the road will be fully functional without the perennial waterlogging. Locals are not just eager but desperate to witness the completion of the maintenance work, hoping for a future where the Amtala to Jirani road is known for its connectivity, not its challenges (Field Observation, February 12, 2023).

Similar to how road construction delays can disrupt daily life, causing inconvenience and frustration for commuters, delays in school construction projects can have many adverse effects on the children attending those schools. These delays can extend beyond mere inconveniences, making the educational institution seem less appealing and welcoming. This perception can lead to increased dropout rates among students who may feel disheartened by the constant disarray and the apparent neglect of their learning environment. Moreover, due to ongoing construction or renovation, inadequate facilities, such as libraries, laboratories, and sports areas, can make learning less effective and significantly less enjoyable. Such conditions not only hinder the physical development of students but also affect their mental well-being and academic motivation, potentially impacting their prospects and overall attitude toward education (Field Observation, December 15, 2023).

The impact of delays in public procurement for construction projects extends well beyond the immediate inconvenience to the contracting parties. It has a domino effect that affects the economic efficiency of the procuring authority, the financial stability of contractors, and, most importantly, the well-being and daily life of the general public. Addressing these delays requires a concerted effort to streamline procurement processes, reduce bureaucratic hurdles, and ensure the timely delivery of public infrastructure projects.

CONCLUSION

The research identified several factors contributing to these delays: engaging overseas consultants, managing foreign loans, funding shortages, delays in inspection reports, obtaining necessary clearances, lack of coordination between ministries,

insufficient project management resources, contractor performance issues, and land acquisition problems. These hurdles often lead to project restarts through time extensions, increased financial allocations, or new tender processes. The text also discusses the impact of public procurement project delays on construction ventures, highlighting indirect infringements on fundamental human rights, financial losses for contractors, and the need for the government to allocate substantial portions of its budget to cover these overruns. It emphasizes the importance of improved communication, accountability, and resource allocation, as well as addressing underlying issues contributing to the delays, such as bureaucratic complexities, workforce limitations, and land acquisition challenges. The study aims to develop more efficient and effective public procurement processes to serve the community's needs better and support overall socio-economic development.

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