



Union Digital Centers (UDCs) in Delivering Services: Roles, Potentials and Challenges

December 3, 2017

Union Digital Centers (UDCs) in Delivering e-Services: Roles, Potentials and Challenges

Study Advisors

Iftekharuzzaman
Executive Director, TIB

Professor Dr. Sumaiya Khair
Adviser - Executive Management, TIB

Mohammad Rafiqul Hassan
Director, Research & Policy

Research Team

Md. Waheed Alam, Senior Program Manager, Research & Policy
Juliet Rossette, Program Manager, Research & Policy
Md. Nure Alam, Deputy Program Manager, Research & Policy
Farhana Rahman, Program Manager, Research & Policy
Nahid Sharmin, Deputy Program Manager, Research & Policy
Kumar Bishwajit Das, Program Manager, Research & Policy
Fatema Afroz, Deputy Program Manager, Research & Policy

Field Data Collection and Monitoring

Md. Monirul Islam Zahid, Deputy Program Manager, Research & Policy
Md. Golam Mostofa, Deputy Program Manager, Research & Policy
Md. Khorshed Alam, Deputy Program Manager, Research & Policy
Zafar Sadeq Chowdhury, Deputy Program Manager, Research & Policy
Md. Mahmud Hassan Talukdar, Deputy Program Manager, Research & Policy
Md. Ali Hossain, Assistant Program Manager, Research & Policy

Acknowledgement

We are grateful to Prime Minister's Office and officials of a2i Programme and Local Government Division for extending cooperation and giving valuable feedback on the research. We also acknowledge the contribution of colleagues from different Divisions and Units of TIB for their valuable feedback and observation that have enriched this report.

Contact

Transparency International Bangladesh
House # 5, Road # 16(New) 27(old),
Dhanmondi, Dhaka 1209.
Tel: +8802 9124789, 9124792
Email: info@ti-bangladesh.org
Website: www.ti-bangladesh.org

Preface

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) works with a vision of Bangladesh where government, politics, business, civil society and people's lives will be free from the influence of corruption, and all government, private and non-governmental organizations will run their operations with transparency, accountability and integrity. TIB is committed to build a strong and effective social movement to prevent corruption and ensure good governance in the country by undertaking research, advocacy and civic engagement initiatives in selected sectors, areas and institutions of public interest.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are widely recognized as powerful tools of socio-economic advancement, poverty reduction and sustainable development ensuring transparent and transformational social inclusion and even spread of developmental benefits. Consistent with the global trend Bangladesh has moved ahead actively and vibrantly under both public and private sector initiatives towards increasing use of ICTs in development efforts, as aptly captured by the flagship strategic thrust of a "Digital Bangladesh" of the government. The Union Digital Centers (UDCs) introduced in 2009 to bring e-services to the doorsteps of grassroots people is a key component of the Access to Information (A2I) Project of the Office of the Prime Minister designed to bring about a series of such transformations in selected areas of public interest. The A2I in general and UDCs in particular represent a strategic emphasis on a transparent and inclusive transformation with potentials for higher standards of governance and integrity as well as reducing corruption.

This study on 'Union Digital Centers (UDCs) in Delivering Services: Roles, Potentials and Challenges' has been undertaken upon a request from A2I Programme, Prime Minister's Office to independently assess the effectiveness of UDCs as well as its challenges and opportunities. The study revealed that the UDCs have immense potentials to make positive contributions to the life and livelihoods of the common people at the service delivery end. After the establishment of UDCs, people have started getting various governments, commercial and information services by spending less time, cost and visits. The research further indicates that scope of becoming victims of corruption have been reduced as digital services have reduced the need for face to face interactions between service providers and recipients.

However, there are areas where further improvements can be made. The policy structure for the UDCs deserves to be strengthened. For instance, some specific instructions regarding entrepreneur selection process, profit sharing mechanism among entrepreneurs, tenure of contract have to be incorporated in the government circular. Through increased campaigns UDC services have to be popularized further to attract more people that would not only expand UDC outreach, but also increase UDC earnings paving the way for their sustainability. The scope and coverage of online solutions can be further expanded, made easier and more user-friendly. Introduction of digital signatures for online delivery of certificates may be considered where applicable. Physical infrastructure needs to be further developed including high speed

internet connections and alternative power supply equipments in situations of interruption of regular power supply. Achievement of full potentials of the UDCs depends on a sense of ownership and appreciation of the potentials of the initiative by all stakeholders, especially UP representatives who may be provided more robust orientation on the conceptual and operational aspects of UDCs as well as their long term benefits for the society.

This research was conducted by my colleagues Md. Waheed Alam, Juliet Rossette, Md. Nur-e-Alam, Farhana Rahman, Nahid Sharmin, Kumar Biswajit Das and Fatema Afroz. Our field-based colleagues - Md. Monirul Islam Zahid, Md. Golam Mostofa, Md. Khorshed Alam, Zafar Sadeq Chowdhury, Md. Mahmud Hassan Talukdar and Md. Ali Hossain extended support in data collection and field monitoring. Other colleagues of Research and Policy, TIB also contributed by providing valuable feedback and comments.

We received full support of the UDC authority in the course of collection of data for the research. The draft findings of research were shared with the team members of A2I Programme, Prime Minister's Office as well as several relevant Government ministries and departments on 25 October 2017 and officials of the Local Government Division on 16 November 2017. On both occasions we gratefully received useful comments and suggestions which were duly incorporated. We would like to put on record our gratitude to all other respondents who provided useful information. Adviser - Executive Management, TIB Professor Dr. Sumaiya Khair guided and supervised the research and Director of Research & Policy- Mohammad Rafiqul Hassan gave valuable feedback and comments to enrich it. Other relevant team members of TIB also usefully participated in various stages of the study.

We hope that concerned stakeholders, particularly the UDC and A2I authority, the Prime Minister's Office and the Local Government Division will consider the recommendations of the research as a means of taking the initiative to higher levels of performance. We will welcome any suggestion and critique for further improvement of the research.

Iftekharuzzaman
Executive Director

Content

	Page No
Chapter One: Introduction	1 - 4
1.1 Background and Rationale	1
1.2 Study Objectives	2
1.3 Methodology	2
1.4 Analysis framework	4
1.5 Structure of the report	4
Chapter Two: Operation of UDCs and Their Challenges	5 - 17
2.1 Establishment of UDC	5
2.2 Location of Surveyed UDCs	5
2.3 Sex of Entrepreneur	6
2.4 Educational Qualification of Entrepreneur	6
2.5 Joining of Entrepreneur	6
2.6 Training Received by Entrepreneur	7
2.7 Presence of Entrepreneur at UDCs	8
2.8 Equipment, Logistics and Financial Support During Establishment	8
2.9 Selection Process of Entrepreneurs	9
2.10 Challenges in the Selection Process	10
2.11 Equipment and Logistics of UDCs at present	10
2.12 Internet access and Power Supply of UDCs	11
2.13 Income, Expenditure and Profit of UDC	12
2.14 Financial Assistance at present from UP	14
2.15 Follow up Mechanism of UDC	14
2.16 Grievance Redresser Mechanism	15
2.17 Complaint Mechanism	16
2.18 Publicity and Information Discloser	16
Chapter Three: Services Extended by UDC	18 - 24
3.1 List of Services Delivered by UDCs	18
3.2 Accessibility of UDCs	18
3.3 Types of services received by service recipients	19
3.4 Service recipients' experiences from UDCs	20
3.5 Time, cost and visits status of service	22
3.6 Satisfaction of level of UDC users	24

Chapter Four: Challenges of UDCs	25 - 28
4.1 Challenges faced by UDC management Committee	25
4.2 Challenges faced by UDCs	26
4.3 Challenges faced by relevant Stakeholders UNO Office & District Administration	27
4.4 Challenges faced by a2i program	27
Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations	29 - 31
5.1 Conclusion	29
5.2 Recommendations	30
 Annex (1-6)	 32 - 33
 Reference	 34

Chapter One

Introduction and Methodology

1.1 Background and Rationale

In contemporary world, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are recognized as powerful tool for socio-economic development. They are known to have brought tremendous welfare to people in terms of better access to information, job creation and enhanced public services through efficient governance and diversification of economic opportunities.¹ Thus, governments in many countries have made large investments in ICT sector. Bangladesh has not been immune from this trend. Eventually, the government have taken many initiatives since early 90s to create an enabling environment for ICT development. The efforts got momentum in 2007 when the Prime Minister's Offices started implementation of the Access to Information (a2i) with the assistance of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Understanding the importance of ICT, the government has built up necessary policy framework. The government adopted ICT Policy in 2002 that was revised in 2009. The Cabinet approved ICT Act 2009. The 9th Parliament passed the Rights to Information Act in 2009. On the other hand, the election manifesto of Bangladesh Awami League for the 9th Parliament (came to power in 2009) envisioned Digital Bangladesh by 2021 for attaining middle income status of the country. One of the objectives of this vision was to establish digital government through developing necessary human resources and connecting citizens specially to ensure service delivery to those who are least served. Eventually, the government made commitments in the 6th and 7th Five Year Plans and Perspective Plan 2021 to establish transparency, accountability, faster delivery of services and prevent corruption with the use of ICT. The United Nations in its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasized on the use of ICT for building effective institutions as delineated in the Goal 16.

Bangladesh faces several obstacles to the effective delivery of public services. Widespread manual processes, resistance to change by civil service and a lack of transparency frustrates citizens in their attempts to avail of government information and services. Opaqueness in service delivery increases the scope for rent-seeking. In this regard, e-governance or digitization process are able to carry out the government mandates more effectively, including delivery of public services, in a more accountable, transparent and inclusive manner at different institutions of national and sub- national levels. Accordingly, digital government has become a government priority.

¹ Digital Bangladesh, Concept Note, Access to Information Programme, Prime Minister's Office, 05/11/2009

In line with above objective enshrined in the Digital Bangladesh, the government established digital centers at unions, upazillas and city corporations to cater one stop e-services to citizens. Initially, thirty union digital centers under the name Union Information and Service Center were established in November, 2009 as a pilot initiative. Later, they were named Union Digital Centers (UDCs) and extended to almost 4500 unions across the country. According to an estimate (2016), 45 million citizens received services from UDCs from 2013-2015. The objectives of these UDCs are to make various government, commercial and information services available to the door-step of citizens; reduce time, cost and visits for receiving services through making them easy and affordable; bring transparency, accountability and efficiency in the activities of union parishads; contribute to develop skilled and entrepreneurial human resources at local level and reduce digital divide between people living in rural and urban areas.

Despite being at nascent stage, the UDCs have immense potentiality in revolutionize the ICT based public services through easing public services and facilitate citizen's wellbeing and socio-economic advancement. However, there is a dearth of studies that have delineated what extent UDCs operations have made public services easy and ubiquitous and UDCs' achievements, prospects and operation challenges in establishing transparency and accountability. Because of TIB niche and experiences in doing research with transparency and accountability matters, A2i project approached them in 2015 to conduct a research to unearth the impact of digitalization in controlling corruption. On the other hand, TIB has been promoting the use of ICT in public services through its research and advocacy campaigns to bring transparency and accountability in services of the government. Because of above reasons, TIB undertook this study on UDCs' prospects and challenges in ensuring public services.

1.2 Study objectives

The main objective of the study is to assess prospects and challenges of UDCs in ensuring e-services at the grassroots.

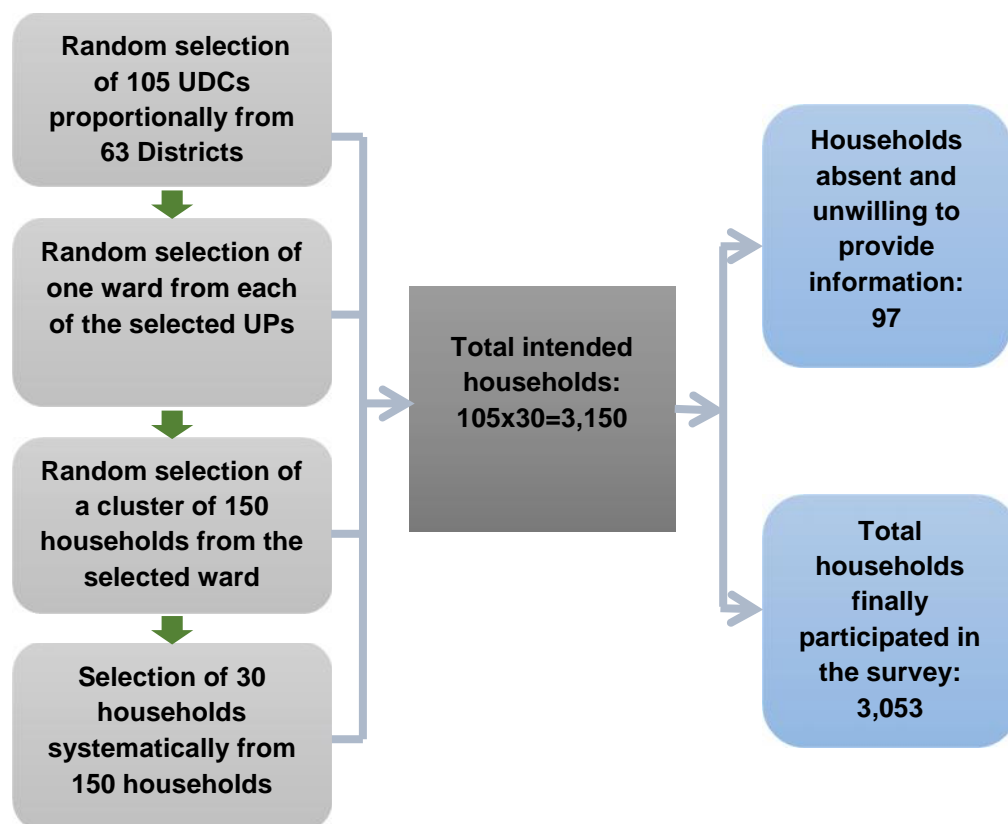
The specific objectives are:

1. To assess roles of UDCs in making government, commercial and information services available to the doorsteps of grass root people
2. To assess achievements and prospects of UDCs in establishing efficiency, transparency and accountability through e-services
3. To identify operational and management challenges UDCs
4. To provide recommendation to enhance effectiveness UDCs

1.3 Methodology

Both quantitative and qualitative research techniques were applied in this study. The quantitative technique involves surveys with UDC users at household level, UP Secretaries and UDC Entrepreneurs. For the user survey, a three stage cluster sampling technique was followed using the list of unions in the country. At first stage, 105 unions from 63 districts were selected randomly proportional to districts' union size. Khagrachari district was not included because of

lower number of unions. Then, a ward was selected randomly from each of selected unions. After that, a cluster of 150 households was selected randomly in each selected wards. Finally, 30 households were selected systematically from each of the selected clusters. Thus, total number of households for the survey stood 3150. However, 97 households could not be interviewed because of their unavailability and unwillingness during the survey. Thus, the user survey could be completed in 3053 households. The surveys of the UP Secretaries and Entrepreneurs were conducted with 91 UP Secretaries and 104 Entrepreneurs respectively. Some UP Secretaries and Entrepreneurs could not be surveyed because of their unavailability during the survey date. The time reference of the user survey was January–December 2016.



The user survey asked questions about the extent of UDC services; availability; time, cost and visit for receiving services and possibilities of corruption reduction during receiving services from UDCs. The surveys with the UP Secretaries and Entrepreneurs asked questions about infrastructure, technological capabilities and their operational challenges of UDCs.

The design of the user survey was a nationally representative one. Analyzing the religious profiles of participating households, it is found that 88.1% belong to Muslim, 11.3% Hindus and 0.6% others. According to ethnic identities, 98.8% households belong to Bangalies and 1.2% to other ethnic groups. Additionally, average household size is found 4.7. All these statistics are found very close to similar indicators in other national surveys conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and others.

On the other hand, some key informant interviews as part of qualitative technique were conducted with Additional Deputy Commissioners (General), Deputy Directors-Local Government, Upazilla Nirbahi Officers (UNO), Programmers, UP Chairmen. They were asked questions regarding challenges they face in operating and interacting UDCs. The indirect sources of information include relevant researches conducted by a2i, government circulars and different documents.

1.4 Analysis framework

The research comes up with some findings by analyzing collected information in line with the objectives of UDC and the study objectives. They include extent of UDC services; reduction in time, cost and visit for receiving services from UDCs; satisfaction level of UDC users; infrastructure, equipment and logistics of UDCs; selection processes of entrepreneurs; attendance of entrepreneurs, training received by entrepreneurs; technological capabilities; campaigns and information disclosures; supports given for the administrative works of UPs; income and expenditures of UDCs, oversight mechanisms; achievements and challenges of UDCs and other stakeholders; lessening of corruption for the provisions of services from UDCs etc.

1.5 Structure of the report

The report has five chapters. The Chapter I presents background and rationale and methodology of the study. Chapter II presents an overview on the operations of UDCs. Chapter III presents the extent UDCs deliver services to grass root people. Chapter IV delineates challenges UDCs experience in operating and delivering services. Chapter V makes concluding remarks based on the findings of the study with policy recommendations to make UDCs more effective.

Chapter Two

Operations of UDCs and Their Challenges

The Access to Information (a2i) programme under the Prime Minister's Office and the Local Government Division initiated UDCs in 2009 bringing various government, commercial and social services to the doorsteps of rural people. Operated by two private entrepreneurs -one male and another woman- under the public-private partnership (PPP) model, the UDC is an ICT enabled one-stop center. It charges certain fees for the delivery of e-services that enable them to operate the UDC and create employment for two entrepreneurs. The government has developed necessary policies and strategies for their operations and invested considerably for equip them with equipment and knowledge and skills. This chapter present their operational matters like manpower, infrastructure, equipment and logistical supports.

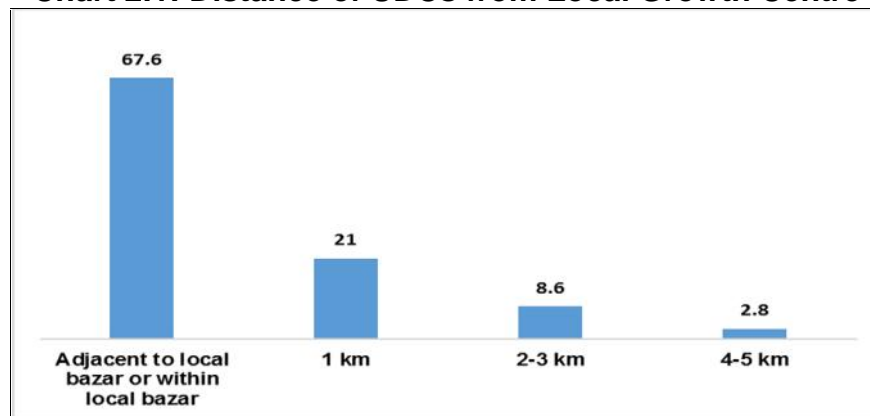
2.1 Establishment of UDCs

After piloting of UDCs in 2009, they were scaled up to 4501 UPs in 2010. In 2011, the number further increased to 4533². Additional, 21 UDCs were established in 2015. Among 105 surveyed UDCs, 58.2% were established in 2010, 35.2% in 2011 and remaining 6.6% during 2012-2015. (Annex - 1)

2.2 Location of UDCs

In the survey, it is found that around 67.6% UDCs were located adjacent to or within local growth center – mostly bazar and 32.4% UDCs were within 1km to 5km far from the local growth center.

Chart 2.1: Distance of UDCs from Local Growth Centre

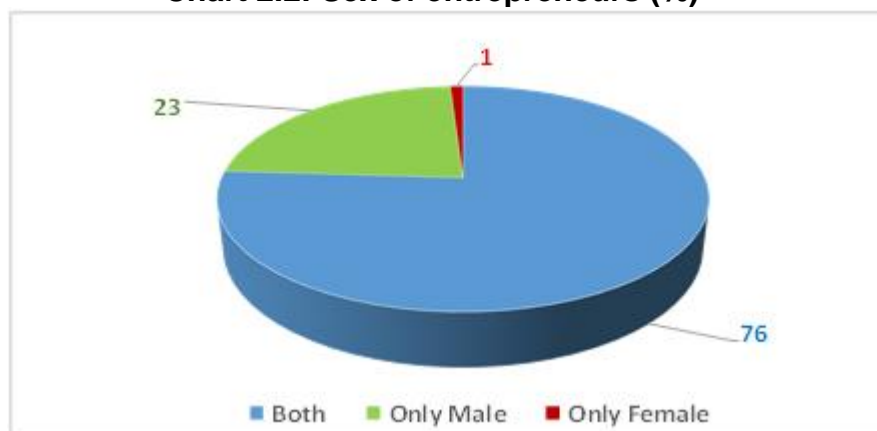


² Census Report on UISCs, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, May 2014.

2.3 Sex of entrepreneurs

According to the circular on UDC operation, one male and one female entrepreneur are supposed to be in a UDC. In the survey of 105 unions, both male and female entrepreneurs are found available in 76% UDCs, whereas only male entrepreneurs in 23% UDCs and only female entrepreneurs in 1% UDC. In some UDCs, husband and wife are the entrepreneurs. (Chart - 2.2)

Chart 2.2: Sex of entrepreneurs (%)



2.4 Educational qualification of entrepreneurs

Of the aforesaid UDCs, 86.0% entrepreneurs had education above Higher Secondary School Certificate (HSC) examination. However, majority of them completed HSC (36.9%). Entrepreneurs who completed Honor's and Master are 26.2% and 23.0% respectively. (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Educational qualification of entrepreneurs

Educational Qualification	Percentage of Entrepreneurs
Secondary	2.1
SSC	11.8
HSC	36.9
Honor's	26.2
Masters	23.0

2.5 Joining dates of entrepreneurs

Among the surveyed UDCs, 96.1% UDCs were established within 2011. From the joining data of the entrepreneurs, it is found that only 43.1% entrepreneurs remain in same UDC. On the other hand, joining information of remaining entrepreneurs (56.9%) implies frequent turnover of entrepreneurs. In 2016, 14.4% entrepreneurs newly joined in the place of old entrepreneurs. (Details in Table 2.2)

Table 2.2: Joining Year of Entrepreneurs in UDCs

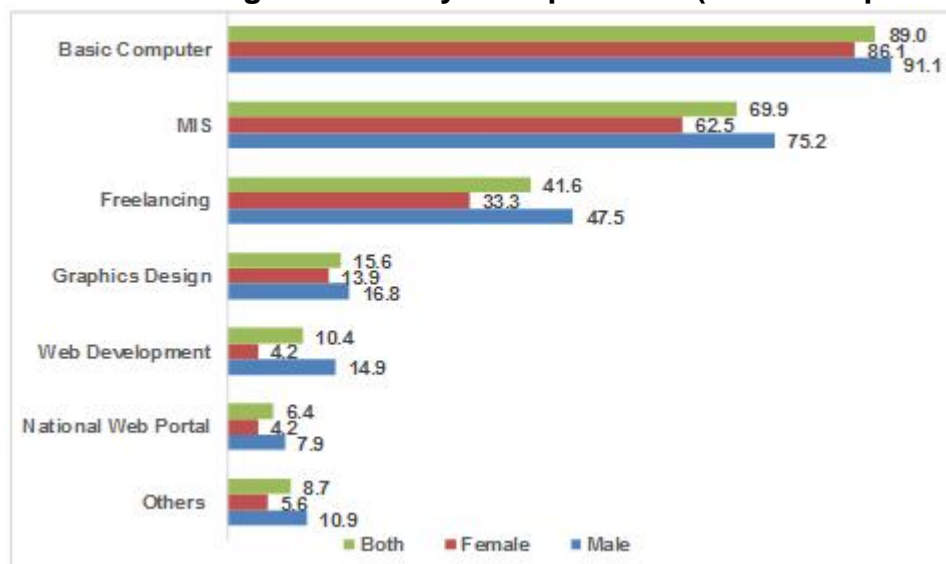
Year	Percentage of Entrepreneurs
2010	21.0
2011	22.1
2012	12.8
2013	8.7
2014	9.2
2015	9.7
2016	14.4
2017	2.1
Total	100.0

2.6 Training received by entrepreneurs

The efficiency service delivery of UDCs depends on the knowledge and skills of entrepreneurs. In the survey, it is found that 89% entrepreneurs - both male and female- got training on Computer Basics. Some income generating training includes Freelancing (41.6%), MIS (69.9%), and Graphics Design (15.6%), and Web development (10.4%). The other training includes Hazz Registration, ETIN, Agent Banking, Online Journalism, Online Bridge, Learning & Earning, ICT, Mobile Apps Development, Database Management, and Digital Content Making.

However, training receiving is found marginally higher among male entrepreneurs compared to female entrepreneurs. For the Computer Basics training, 91.1% male entrepreneurs received training where corresponding figures for female entrepreneurs 86.1%.

Chart 2.3: Training Received by Entrepreneurs (% of Entrepreneur)



2.7 Presence of entrepreneurs at UDCs

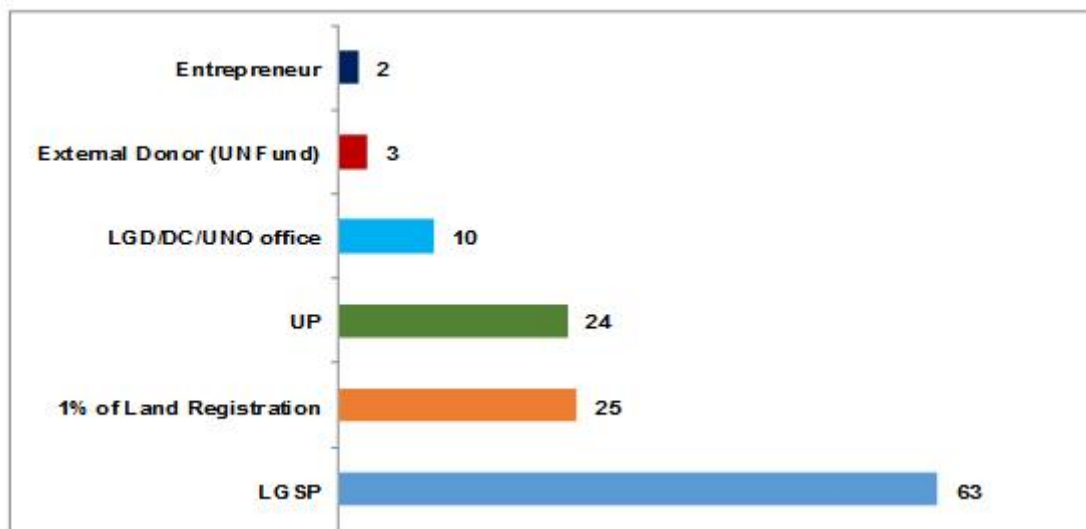
The presence of male entrepreneurs at UDCs is found higher compared to women entrepreneurs. Due to social obstacles, women entrepreneurs sometimes cannot attend in UDCs. The average presence of entrepreneurs was found 20 days in December 2016. The presence is found higher among the male entrepreneurs (24 days) compared to female entrepreneurs (15 days). Most of the male entrepreneurs (53.5%) are present for 22-28 days in December 2016. In case of female entrepreneurs, 24.8% female entrepreneurs were present below 15 days (Annex 4). Even 14.8% female entrepreneurs are found not present in December 2016.

2.8 Equipment, logistics and financial support during establishment

During establishment of UDCs, major equipment and logistics were given by LGD and Bangladesh Computer Council (BCC). Funds for their establishment came from LGSP, 1% of land registration, DC/UNO/UP office and in some cases the concern entrepreneurs as well. The technical supports were provided by the Bangladesh Computer Society (BCS). The establishment process was supervised by concerned District Commissioner (DC) and UNO offices. Besides, as many as of two hundred private organizations also helped the project in various ways.³

In the survey, it is found that most of the establishment cost of UDCs (63%) was funded from LGSP. Other major contributors were 1% Land Registration Fund (25%), UP (24%) and LGD/DC/UNO Offices (10%). A few UDCs were funded by entrepreneurs (2%).

Chart 2.4: Sources of fund during establishment of UDCs (% of UDC) (multiple response)



**Total UDC 91*

³ ICT for Development and UISC – A Step to Alleviate Poverty in Rural Areas of Bangladesh

During establishment, a total of BDT 277.76 crore⁴ (40 million USD) was allocated for 4,554 UPs, of which BDT 243.04 crore (35 Million USD) came from Annual Development Programme (ADP) and BDT 34.72 crore (5 million USD) from UNDP funded a2i project. A total of BDT 155 crore was used to procure new ICT equipment, accessories and furniture. And remaining BDT 122.76 crore was spent for capacity building, orientation for people's representatives and authorities at local level.

It is found that altogether on average BDT 3,44,500 was spent for ICT equipment, furniture and different accessories per UDC during establishment of UDC. Of which loan share was spent i.e BDT 291,000 for ICT equipment like computer, laptop, printer, camera, multi-media projector etc.

Table 2.3: Total overheads during establishment

Area of expenditure	Average Expenditure Per UDC (BDT)	Total Estimated Expenditure (BDT in Crore)
Equipment (computer, laptop, printer, scanner, photocopier, multimedia projector, camera, spiral binder etc.)	2,91,000	131
Furniture (Table, chair, fan etc.)	34,000	15.3
Different Accessories (modem, sound system accessories, computer accessories, electric accessories, IPS/UPS/Solar/generator etc.)	19,500	8.8
Total	3,44,500	155.0

2.9 Selection process of entrepreneurs

The guideline for selection of entrepreneurs in the UDC circular issued by the Local Government Division is not elaborate and explicit enough. The circular was issued on 30 January 2013. According to the circular, the UISC (UDC) Management Committee comprising UP Chair, Secretary and some honorable individuals of concerned locality would play key role in the selection of entrepreneurs. One male and one female entrepreneur need to be selected as per this circular. Additionally, one male and one female entrepreneurs would be selected to constitute the alternative entrepreneurs. After selection an agreement between UP and entrepreneurs would be signed for a fixed term. For termination of any entrepreneur, approval from concerned UNO is mandatory.

In the circular, there is no clause that made advertisement for entrepreneur selection mandatory. In the survey, it is found that among the surveyed UDCs, 32% UPs (29 UPs) proactively published advertisement for the selection of entrepreneurs. Among these 32% UPs,

⁴ 1 USD = 69.44 BDT (2009-10)

59% UPs published advertisement in UP offices, 10% UP in UNO offices and 31% in both the offices. Moreover, among these 32% UDCs, in most of the cases (87%) one to five candidates applied and in other UDCs (13%) more than five candidates applied.

In 87% UPs, concerned Management Committee selected entrepreneurs by their authority without holding any exam. Exams held in 13% UPs to select entrepreneurs, of which advertisement was published in 9 UPs.

After completion of the selection, an agreement is signed in the stamp paper between UP and the entrepreneurs. It is to be noted that no fixed tenure of UDC is mentioned in the circular. However, tenure differs from 3 to 5 years among the UDCs.

2.10 Challenges in the selection of entrepreneurs

At the beginning of UDC initiative, it was very difficult to find skilled and capable entrepreneurs in a considerable number of unions. For this reason, UP Chairs and Secretaries tried to select entrepreneurs from their own relatives and personal connections without giving attention to their knowledge and skills on computer and other ICT technologies as opined by relevant key informants. Eventually, in some cases entrepreneurs found to be less skilled in some UDCs. Such entrepreneurs always feel risk of termination if the tenure of their selecting UP Chairs' term would expire.

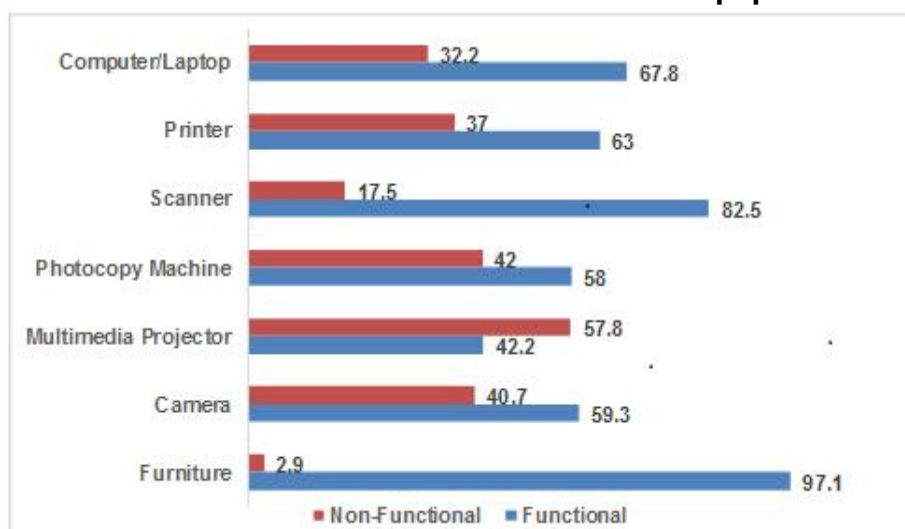
Additionally, in most of the UDCs, finding skilled and competent female entrepreneurs is a big challenge. Sometimes, families do not encourage female entrepreneurs to go to UDCs for social barriers and obstacles specially for working with unknown male entrepreneurs. Because of this, in some places female entrepreneurs are found as family members or relatives of the male entrepreneurs. It also found that sometimes female entrepreneurs cannot continue longer when they are married and move to another place.

2.11 Equipment and Logistics of UDCs at present

In the UDCs, there are various types of equipment. In surveyed UDCs, it is found that 32% to 42% essential equipment like computer/laptop, printer, camera and photocopy machine are non-functional (Details in Chart 2.5).

As considerable number of ICT equipment are non-functional, faster and flawless services cannot be ensured in those UDCs that suffer this problem. Due to shorter tenure agreement, the entrepreneurs are reluctant to invest for the replacement or repair of non-functional equipment. In remote areas, absence of good technical hand is also posing threats.

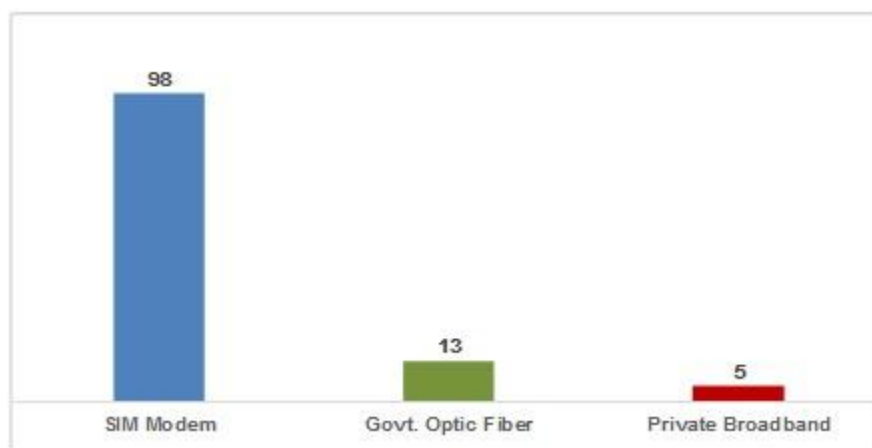
Chart 2.5: Functional and non-functional equipment in UDCs



2.12 Internet access and power supplies of UDCs

In the survey, it is found that most of the UDCs (98%) are using SIM modem for internet connectivity. In addition, 13% UDCs are availing fiber optic connectivity installed by the Bangladesh Telecommunication Company Limited (BTCL) (Details in Chart 2.6). However, it is to be noted that fiber optic connection line has been stretched to 19% UDCs. As SIM modem is found in most of the UDCs, slow internet speed is experienced in those UDCs mostly in remote areas thereby causing delays and inefficiency in service deliveries.

Chart 2.6: Types of internet connectivity (Percentage of UDC)

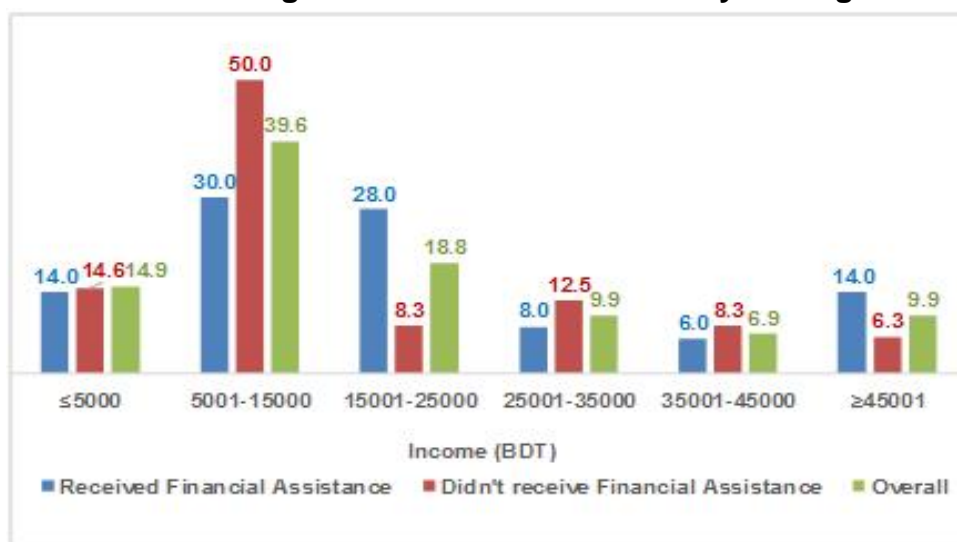


Regarding alternative supply of power, only 38% UDCs have alternative sources like solar panel, generator, IPS etc. Thus, remaining 62% UDCs do not have alternative power sources during load shedding thereby causing disruptions in their service deliveries.

2.13 Income, expenditure and Profit of UDCs

The income of an UDC depends on the types of services UDCs provide and the demand of those services in that neighborhood. The UDC Management Committee set a price for different services with the consultation with concerned UNO. According to circulars, the government has set fees for birth and death registration certificates. But there are services for which fees have not been fixed; for example, if someone uses the internet, the recipient has to pay as per their verbal contract or haggling.⁵ These payments constitute incomes of a UDC. In December 2016, the average monthly income of UDC was found Tk 22,221 and average monthly expenditure including investment was Tk. 6,418. It is found that overall in 14.9% UDCs average monthly income is comparatively very low which less than 5000 BDT is. (Chart 2.7)

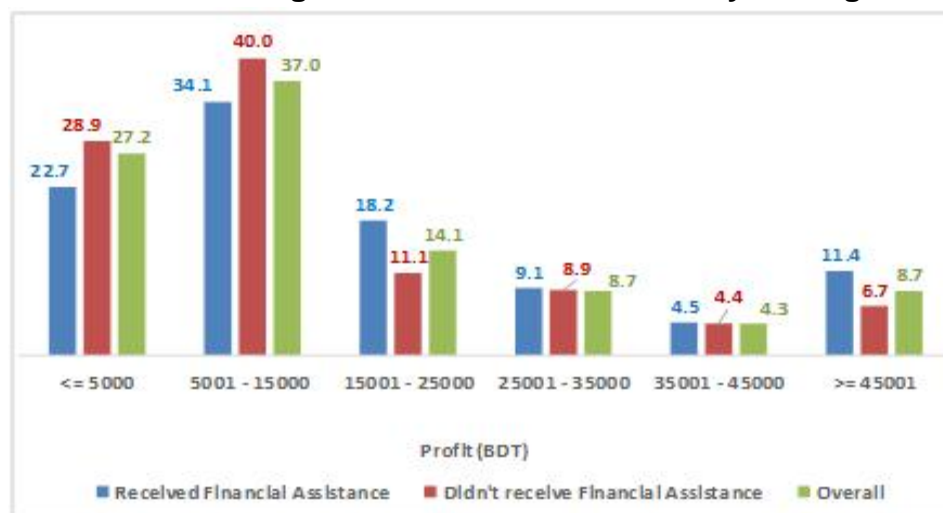
Chart 2.7: Percentage of UDCs Based on Monthly Average Income



The average monthly profit was found Tk. 15,803. Around 42% UDCs made profit more than average monthly profit of Tk. 15,803 (Chart 2.7), where commercial services were found to be quite as high as 75% or more.

⁵ KII of Chairman, UP

Chart 2.8: Percentage of UDCs Based on Monthly Average Profit



In the itemized income it is found that major income came from commercial services Tk. 12,732. However, considering single service birth registration services was found to be highest (Tk 8,341) (Details in Table 2.4).

Table 2.4: Itemized average monthly income (December 2016)

Type of Services	Percentage of UDC	Average Monthly Income from services
Birth Registration and Print	100	8,341
Other Govt. Services	97.1	3,970
Different Information Services	61.5	1,817
Commercial Services	95.2	12,732

In the survey, in the itemized expenditure and investment it is found that most of the UDCs (81.2%) expenditures for maintenance of equipment Tk. 1126. However, highest amount of expenditure made for purchase of equipment by 75.2% UDCs. (Details in Table 2.5)

Table 2.5: Itemized expenditure and investment of UDCs (December 2016)

Expenditure item	Percentage of UDC	Monthly Average Expenditure (TK)
Maintenance of Equipment	81.2	1126
Purchase of Equipment	75.2	3581
Purchase of Logistics and Accessories	64.4	2441
Bill of Electricity	43.6	693
Salary of Assistants	24.8	4117

2.14 Financial assistance from UPs

UDCs being run in the mode of Public and Private Partnership (PPP), it is expected that they would not receive any financial assistance from UPs. However, it is found that some UDCs cannot repair idle equipment and buy necessary ones. In such cases, some UDCs resort to Union Parishads or Upazila Parishads for their repair and buying⁶. Usually local governments do that from LGSP project in consultation with concerned UNO, their revenues fund and 1% of Land Registration income.⁷ Among the surveyed UDCs, 50% UDCs⁸ received financial assistance from LGSP and UP's own fund specially from 1% land tax for maintenance of equipment and buying logistics like paper, tonner, equipment for repairing in some cases etc. Among them 77% got from the LGSP project and 23% from UP's fund from 1% land tax. In 2016, average amount of assistance worth Tk 4,353. Among UDCs that receive this fund 93% of them maintain register for their documentation about the sources of fund and amount received while 7% UDCs do not do so.

2.15 Follow up mechanisms of UDCs

Each UDC is operated by two young local entrepreneurs under the supervision and guidance of Advisory Committee headed by UP Chair along with UP Secretary. Thus, UDCs need to submit monthly report to the Committee. In the survey, it is found that about half of the entrepreneurs (55.3%) submit monthly report to UP Secretaries regularly. On the other hand, 22.3% of surveyed UDCs do not submit the same (Details in Table 2.6).

Table 2.6: Monthly Report Submission

Response about monthly report submission	Frequency	Percentage of UDC
Regular	57	55.3
Irregular	23	22.3
Not Submission	23	22.3
Total	103	100.0

UDCs provide different types of services to ordinary citizens. Entrepreneurs are supposed to maintain a register where they preserve names of services, price, and names of service recipients for preparing daily reports. In the survey, it is found that 35% entrepreneurs maintain this register regularly while 51.5% do not maintain (Details in Table 2.7).

⁶ KII of Deputy Director (DD)-LG

⁷ KII of Chairman, UP

⁸ Out of 100 UDC

Table 2.7: Percentage of UDCs Maintaining Daily Register

Response about maintenance of daily registrar	Frequency	Percentage of UDC
Regular	36	35.0
Irregular	14	13.6
Not Maintained	53	51.5
Total	103	100.0

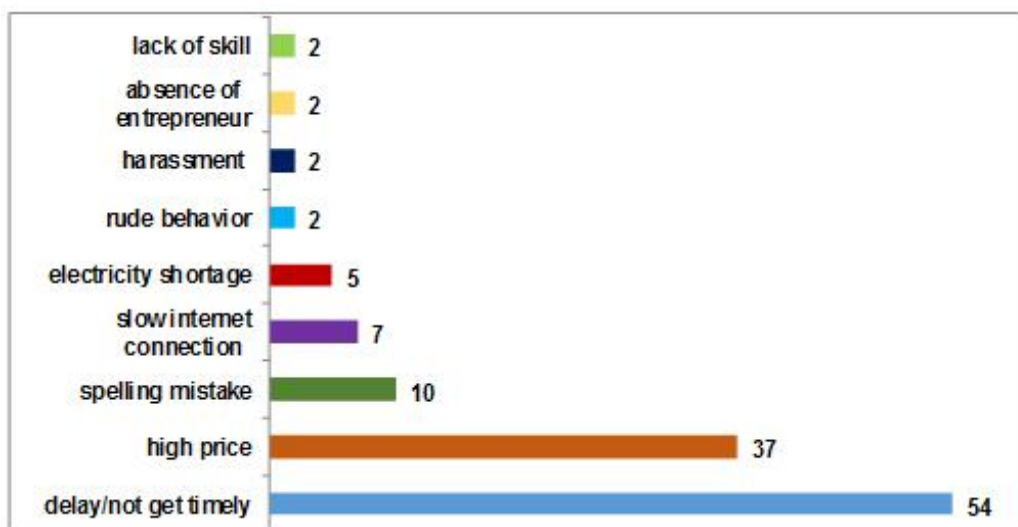
There is a provision to submit income and number of services delivered on the a2i prescribed online system on a daily basis. Regarding report submission, about two-thirds of the entrepreneurs (67%) submit daily report on the system regularly. It is found in the survey that 7.8% UDCs do not submit daily report online (Details in Table 2.8).

Table 2.8: Daily report submissions

Response about daily report submission	Frequency	Percentage of UDC
Regular	69	67.0
Irregular	26	25.2
Not Submission	8	7.8
Total	103	100.0

2.16 Grievance redress mechanism

In the surveyed UDCs, though most of the UDCs (82%) have grievance redresser mechanism, people came up with their complaint to 47% UPs Secretaries of concerned UDCs. Among the complaints, most of the cases (54%) people were aggrieved for not getting services on timely manner (Details Chart 2.9).

Chart 2.9: Types of grievances (Multiple Response) (% of Recipients)

In most of cases, the UP Chairs and Secretaries try to resolve grievances instantly discussing with concerned entrepreneurs, in some cases they counseled entrepreneurs to deliver better services. However, UPs face difficulties to resolve grievances aligned with technical matters because of slow internet speed, power interruptions etc.

2.17 Complaint Mechanism

According to the survey findings, 8.6% of service recipients had complaint against the UDC service. Among them 81.3% service recipients didn't inform his/her complaint to the authority and 18.7% were informed his/her complaint to the authority.

2.18 Publicity and Information Disclosure

The government has taken elaborate campaign to make Digital Bangladesh popular. In line with the campaign, the government publicizes UDCs at local level through different mediums. In the circular, it is mentioned that UP Management Committee would take measures to popularize UDCs. However, according to user survey it is found that traditional medium like miking (6.6%) campaign through radio/TV/Newspapers/National Web portal (2.6%) of households. Rather majority of people learnt about UDC services from their family members, relatives and neighbor (55.0%) and after going to UP (48.8%). In some union to make UDC popular, various video documentaries related to UDC was also shown by projectors in different places on the day of the hats.⁹ These findings do imply that campaign by the entrepreneurs and UP Management Committee has been less effective and failed to reach majority people. It might happen that camping left remote areas uncovered.

People know about UDCs by name but they do not know about the extent of the services UDCs provide due to apparent lack of publicity at local level¹⁰. In the survey it is found that, 79.6% household heard the name of UDC but don't know the comprehensiveness of UDC services. During formation of UDC, the publicity played a major role to make it popular but afterwards the publicity was limited.¹¹ Some services like online application for documents of land, passport were not popular to general people.¹²

In regard to display of information board with inclusive information with name and price of services, it is found that 45% UDCs displayed information through visible information board.

In 2016, 33.4% Households came to know about UDC by the publicity through miking, banner and meeting arranged by UP (Details in Table 2.9). In some union to make UDC popular, various video documentaries related to UDC was also shown by projectors in different places on the day of the hats.¹³

⁹ KII of UNO

¹⁰ KII of Deputy Director (DD), LG, Assistant Programmer

¹¹ KII of Assistant Commissioner, ICT

¹² Among the service recipients in UDC only 0.7% applied for online passport service and 0.5% for Land Records of Rights

¹³ KII of UNO

Table 2.9: Ways of Publicity (Multiple Answer)

Ways of Publicity	Percentage of Households
Family members, relatives and neighbor	55.0
After going to UP	48.8
Meeting arranged by UP	24.2
Miking	6.6
Radio/TV/Newspaper/National Web Portal	4.2
Leaflet, Notice board, Banner, Bill board	2.6
Social Network/ School	2.2

Various steps were taken for the campaigning of UDC from the district level, such as pulling digital banners in different places and urging UNO and UP Chairmen for campaign through a meeting at district level and informing union people through video conference.¹⁴ From upazila level, UNO gave guideline to entrepreneurs for publicity and promoted UDC services in different meetings, programs and fairs at union and upazila level.¹⁵

Most of the respondents (94.5%) said that they didn't find price list of the service hanging in the UDC, only 5.5% respondents saw the price list hanged inside the UDC premises. Those who had seen the price list, among them 59.6% were paid less than the price list, 31.9% paid same as the price list and 8.5% paid more than the price list. Only 2.3% service recipients found the schedule of UDC hanging in the Union Parishad premises, 52.0% didn't find office schedule in UDC/UP and 45.7% service recipients said that they had no any idea about office schedule of respective UDC.

¹⁴ KII of ADC-ICT, Assistant Commissioner-ICT, Assistant Programmer

¹⁵ KII of UNO

Chapter Three

Services Extended by UDCs

There is no denying that ICT based information and public services can increase people's access to livelihood information and knowledge on education, health, agriculture, employment and migration, empower them in terms of market prices, facilitate communication through video or Skype conference etc. Thus, UDCs have become a local service delivery points to bring various ICT based government, commercial and social services to the doorsteps of rural people. Moreover, e-services make public service deliveries and information disseminations easy and harassment free by reducing people's time, cost and visits for receiving services.

3.1 List of services delivered by UDCs

Major ICT based services delivered by UDCs are as follows:

Government services: 1. Online Birth Registration 2. Different types of government forms 3. Government circulars and notices 4. Online university admission 5. Public Examination results 6. Population census data entry 7. Citizenship certificate 8. Land registration certificate etc.

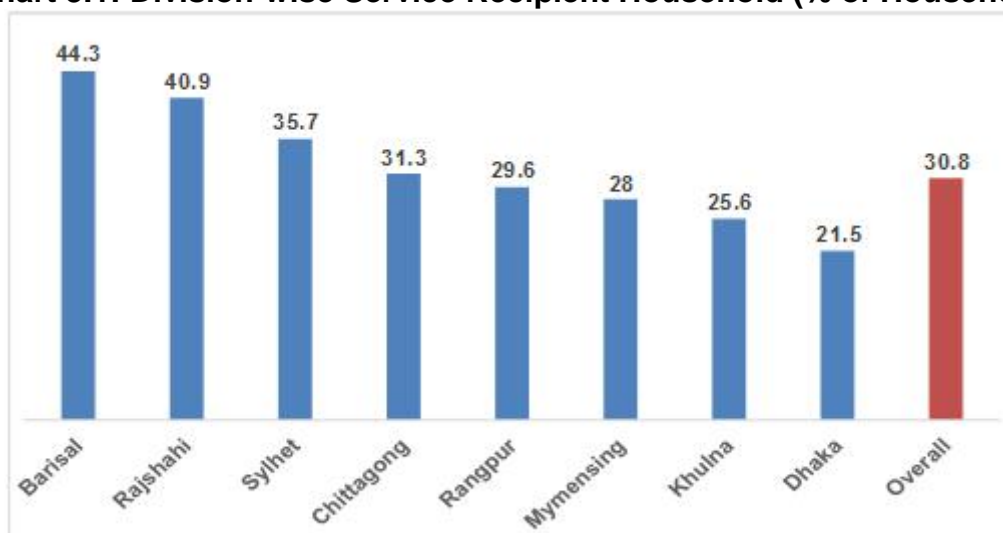
Commercial Services: 1. e-Banking, life insurance 2. English learning 3. Computer training 4. Internet browsing 5. E-mail 6. Printing 7. Scanning 8. Compose 9. Photocopy 10. Laminating 11. Data entry 12. Photography 13. Phone call 14. Flexi load 15. Mobile ringtone download 16. Video show 17. Video conference 18. Projector rent 19. Application form fill-up for Passport 20. visa processing 21. Height and weight measurement 22. Blood pressure measurement etc.

Information Services: 1. Agriculture 2. Health 3. Education 4. Law & human Rights 5. Tourism, 5. Environment and disaster management 7. Science and technology 8. Industry and commerce and 9. Employment etc.

3.2 Accessibility of UDCs

According to user survey, members of 30.8% households received different government, commercial and information services from January to December 2016 from 105 surveyed UDCs. Thus, 69.2% household didn't receive any service from the UDCs within the reference period. Service recipient households are found highest in Barisal division where members of 44.3% households received services from UDCs and lowest in Dhaka division where 21.3% households received services.

Chart 3.1: Division-wise Service Recipient Household (% of Household)



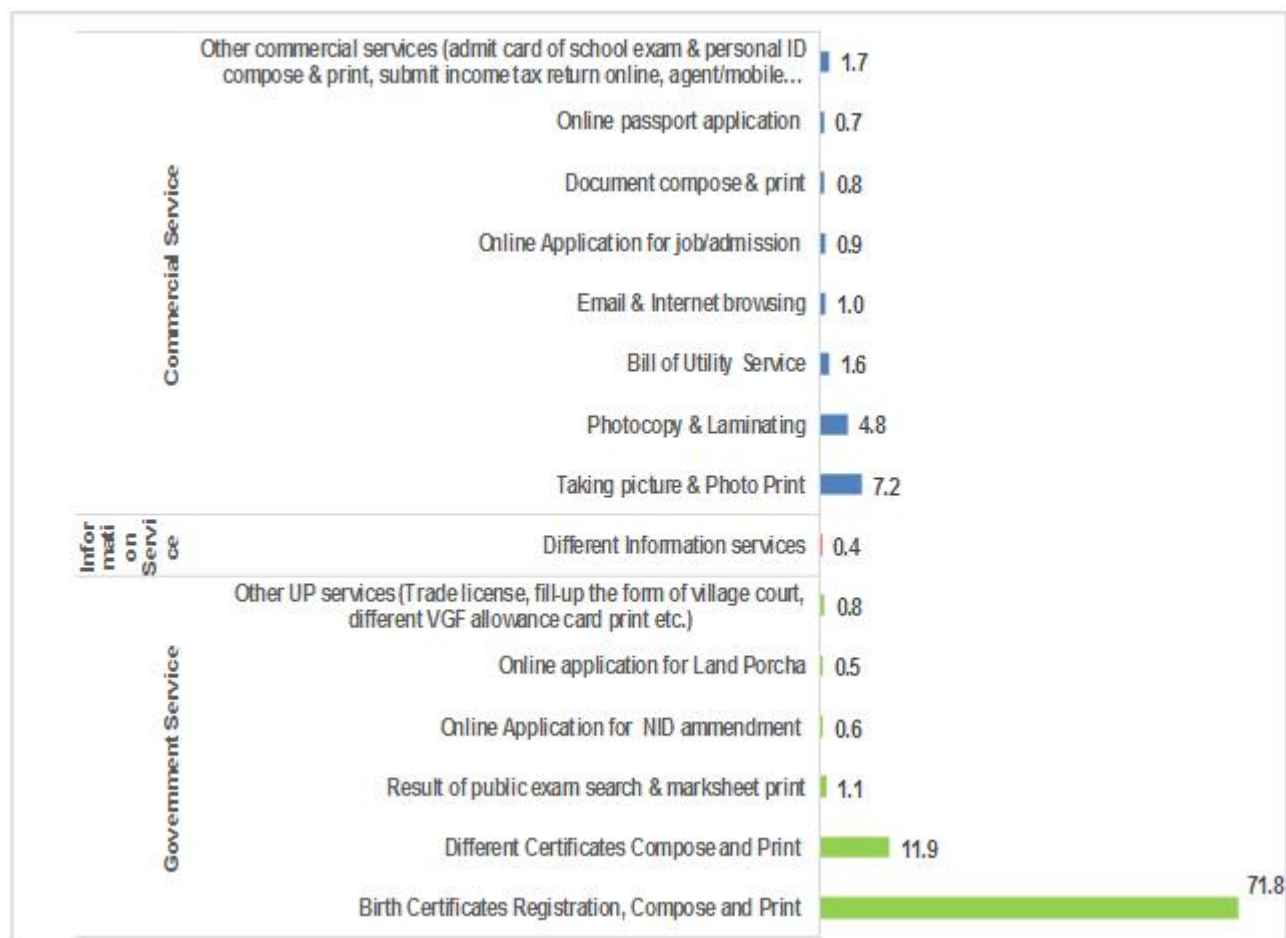
Among households that didn't receive services from UDCs, 95.1% households said that they did not require any service from UDCs during the surveyed referenced period and 4.9% households mentioned long distance, relatively high cost of commercial services, etc. for not receiving services from UDCs.

Among the service recipient households, members 83.8% of households received services from UDCs by himself/ herself and 16.2% received services with the assistance of others (family members, UP Members, entrepreneurs, UP Secretaries, etc.).

3.3 Types of services received by service recipients

Among three major categories of services, receiving of government services is found to be dominant. Among all services recipients who received services from surveyed UDCs, 86.7% received government services. Commercial and information services received by 18.7% and 0.4% service recipients respectively. It is to be noted that among all government services, an overwhelming majority of service recipients received service online birth registration (71.8%). Other dominant services received include compose and print of different certificates issued by UP (11.9%), search of public exam results and printing of mark-sheets (1.0%) under the category of government services; taking pictures and their prints (7.2%), photocopy and laminating (4.8%) under commercial services etc. It is also noted that only a small percent of service recipients received online application of passport (0.7%) and *parcha* (Record of Rights) (0.5%). However, online land *parcha* services are available in 39 out of 105 surveyed UDCs.

Chart 3.2: Services taken from UDCs in 2016 (Percentage of service recipients)



3.4 Service recipients' experiences from UDCs

According to the user survey, 91.3% service recipients said that they found entrepreneurs at UDC during schedule time/office hours. Among the service recipients, 51.4% obtained services by a single visit; thus, 48.6% respondents had to go more than 1 times. The reasons for more than one visit include due to the nature of the services (31.3%), crowd of service recipients (22.6%), absence of UP Chairmen (19.9) and UP Secretary (12.9), disruption of power (7.5%) and internet connection (4.6%) etc.

Chart 3.3: Availability of Entrepreneurs

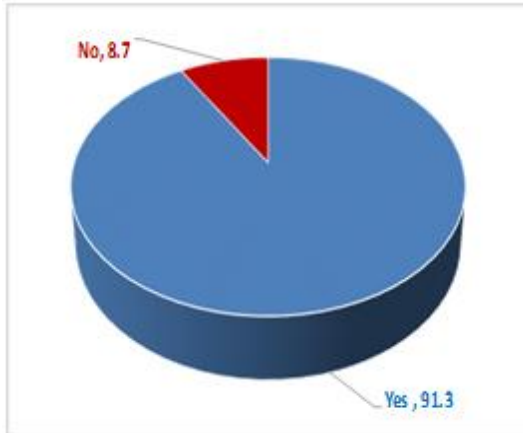
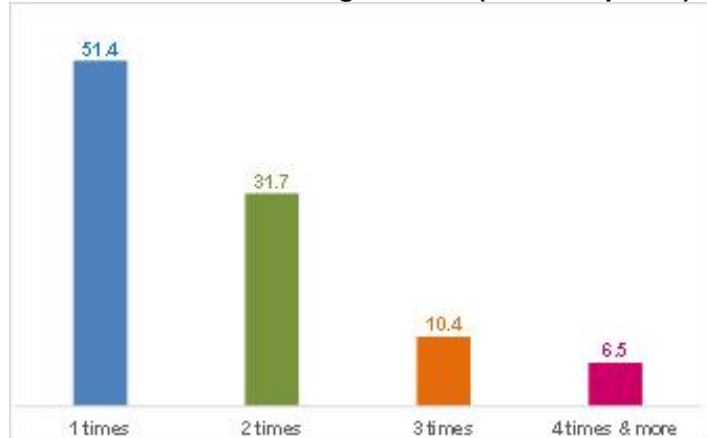


Chart 3.4: Visits for receiving services (% of Recipients)



As Birth Registration was found to be the dominant service delivered by UDCs, an attempt was made to learn visit pattern of those recipients. It is found that more service recipients had to come more than once for receiving birth certificate. Among the Birth Registration service recipients, 36.4% obtained services by a single visit; thereby 63.6% service recipients had to make more than 1 visit. The reasons for which service recipients had to make more than 1 visit include due to nature of the services (31.2%), crowd of service recipients (23.3%), absence of UP Chairmen (21.3%) and UP Secretary (14.0%), absence of entrepreneurs (10.8%), disruption of power (9.0%) and internet connection (8.5%) etc. (Details in Table 3.1).

Chart 3.5: Visit for Receiving Birth Registration (% of Recipients)

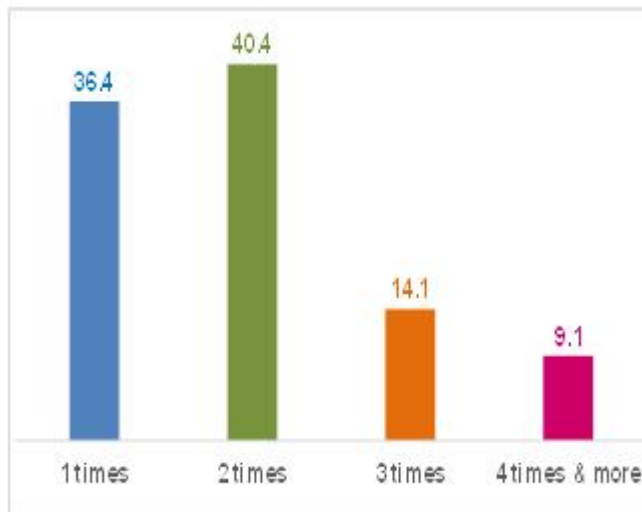


Table 3.1: Reasons For More than One Visit (For Birth Registration Service)

Reasons for more than One Visit	Percentage of service recipient
For nature of the service	31.2
crowd of service recipient	23.3
Absence of UP Chair where applicable	21.3
Absence of UP Secretary where applicable	14
Absence of entrepreneur	10.8
Power shortage	9
Disruption in internet connection	8.5
Shortage of essential document	5
Non-functional computer/printer	1.8
Lack of efficiency of entrepreneur	1.7

3.5 Time, cost and visits status of service (in online application for land record and passport)

As one of the objectives of digitized service promotion at union level is to reduce time, cost and visit for getting services. Moreover, it is believed that digital services can reduce direct interaction between service provider and service recipient that eventually reduce chances of corruption. Therefore, in this study, one public service (online application for land record) and one commercial service (online application for passport) were considered to compare changes in terms of time, cost and visit due to introduction of e-services replacing the traditional and manual ones.

In regard to online application of land record, it is found that time, cost and visits for land record reduced considerably due to introduction of online land record application from USCs compared to traditional land record services form Record Room located at Deputy Commissioner's Office. In the user survey, it is found that 2.9% (89) users received land record from Record Room located at DC office. Of which 48.3% (43) had to wait on average 4-5 hours. They had to pay on average BDT 449 for traveling, night stay and food costs. And, they had to go there on average three times for the land record. Moreover, 56% service recipients had to pay DBT 373 as bribe. In case of receiving of land record through online application from UDCs, it is found that 2 service recipients out of 5 had to wait 1-2 hours. They did not need to spend any money for traveling, staying and food cost. Only, they had to pay Tk 100 as service charge for this service to UDC. Service recipients did not need to pay bribe for receiving this service because of the snapping of contact between the service recipients and service provider and service recipient. Similar, observations were observed in case of online passport application from UDCs or commercial places.

Table 3.2: Comparative analysis in collecting land record copy from UDCs and land record room at district level

Service providing Organization	Service recipients	Time	Cost	Visit	Financial Irregularities
UDC	Among the surveyed UDCs, who provide online application services for Land Records (39 UDC*), only 1% (n=5) of recipients have taken the service from the concerned UDCs.	2 service recipients out of 5 have to wait for the service (1-2 hours)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no cost of lodging, food and travel The service charge of the entrepreneur is about Tk. 100 (Without government fees) 	Service recipients had to go to UDC on two occasions due to the reasons for the nature of the service. (5 people)	There was no irregularities reported in getting service from the UDCs among surveyed HHs

Service providing Organization	Service recipients	Time	Cost	Visit	Financial Irregularities
Land record room at district level	2.9% (89) of the surveyed HHs, took land rights records from the land records room at district level	43 out of 89 service recipients had to wait (20 minutes-11 hours, in which for every 2/3 consecutive days 4-5 hours has to wait)	Service recipients had to spend an average of Tk. 449 for food and travel the district town.	On average, 3 times have to go to the land records room at district level for the land rights record (82 service recipients)	There are financial irregularities; In the case of land rights record copy collection, 56% of service recipients have to pay bribe an average of Tk. 737.**

* All the UDCs are not fully functional to provide land records because the district, Upazila and Union have not been fully digitized. In some cases, the entrepreneurs also lose interest to provide online application for the land rights records copy due to the unexpected delay in the land records room at district level.

** According to the National Household Survey on Corruption 2015, 58.5% of the service recipients HHs, who took the service from the land records room at district level, were found to have financial irregularities during the collection of authorized land rights records copy.

Table 3.3: Comparative analysis of completing and printing service of online passport form fill up from the UDCs and other person/private computer shop

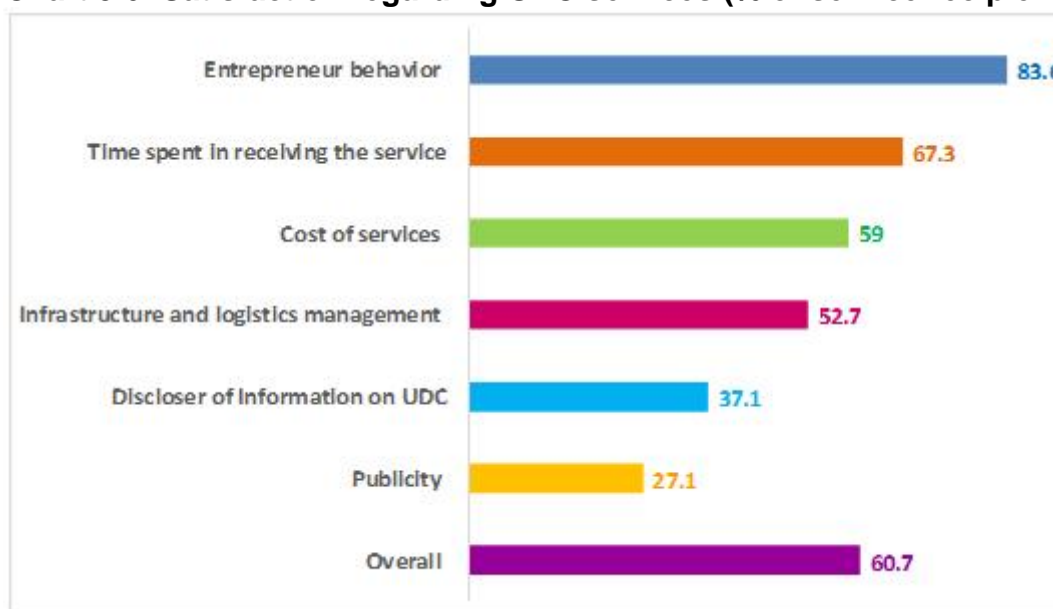
Service providing organization	Service recipients	Time	Cost	Visit(s)
UDC	Among the surveyed UDCs, 0.7% of service recipients (7) have completed the online	2 of the 7 service recipients had to wait for the online passport form fill up and print service.	Service recipients had to pay Tk. 50-150 as service charge of the entrepreneur. (2 service recipients)	Among the service recipients, did not have to go to multiple times in UDCs.

	passport application form.	(average 1 - 1.30 hours)		
Other person/ private computer center	0.7% of the surveyed HHs (22) received online passport application form fill up and print service from another person /private computer shop.	9 of the 22 service recipients had to wait for the online passport form fill up and print service from another person/computer shop. (average 1 - 1.30 hours)	The service recipients spend an average of Tk. 331 for completing and printing purposes.	Have to go multiple times (9 service recipients)

3.6 Satisfaction level of UDC users

The user survey reveals that service recipients' satisfaction on UDC services is fairly high. Overall 60.7% of service recipients were satisfied about UDC services and relevant issues. Most of the service recipients (83.6%) were satisfied about the behaviors of entrepreneurs and least satisfied the publicity of UDCs (27.1%) (Details in Chart 3.6).

Chart 3.6: Satisfaction regarding UDC services (% of service recipient)



Chapter Four

Challenges of UDCs

The UDC model for bringing e-services to the doorsteps of grass roots has been in operation for 8 years now. Thus, it is still in a nascent stage. A number of tools and processes have been tested involving different stakeholders at multiple layers. By this time, UDCs have made considerable achievements. On the other hand, it is very natural that UDCs would face challenges at different levels. This chapter delineates challenges entrepreneurs, Management Committee and DC and UNO Offices face.

4.1 Challenges faced by UDC Management Committees

Absence of specific and elaborate guideline for entrepreneur selection and UDC management

Although UDCs started operations in 2009, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives issued an official circular on 30 January, 2013 for the operations of UDCs. But the circular was not comprehensive and elaborate one. Therefore, it has not been equipped enough to address some emerging challenges. The guideline challenges include absence of transparent processes to select entrepreneurs (issuance of advertisement, competitive exams etc.), required technical proficiency of entrepreneurs, distribution of UDC profits between the entrepreneurs, tenure of agreement between UP and entrepreneurs and standardization of service charges. For these reasons, UP Chairs and Secretaries face challenges during selection of entrepreneurs, supporting and guiding UDCs. Moreover, these loopholes create some space to indulge in anomalies in the operations and service provisions of UDCs.

Not getting skilled entrepreneurs and social barriers

For entrepreneur recruitment, it is mentioned in the circular to find out skill professional from the locality and recruit accordingly. But, UP authorities often faced difficulties to recruit capable professionals because of the dearth of capable candidates. Additionally, it had been far more difficult to find skilled female candidates. Social barriers also pose difficulties as some female entrepreneurs are often discouraged by their families to work with other male counterpart. Sometime, female entrepreneurs get marry at an early age and depart to their husbands' localities.

Not enough space in the UP premises for UDCs accommodation

Most of the UPs have their own premise. However, there are few UPs that do not have their own premise. In those cases, UDCs have to be installed in another places. In such cases, it is sometimes difficult to give friendly services without the proximity of UPs.

Another challenge is that in some UPs available space given to UDCs is not enough. In those cases, the UDCs have to share rooms with UP Chairs or Secretaries. Thus, entrepreneur cannot keep their devices properly and as a result their services are interrupted for the inconvenience. It is to be noted that if any UP don't have enough space, authority try to

accommodate the place for UDC as much possible as it is mentioned in the circular that the placement of UDC should be arranged by UP without any rent. Though UP arrange the place for UDC, it is not enough for smooth service delivery to the huge crowd.

Lack of orientation to UP Chairs and other Members

UDCs are bring run in the concept of public-private partnership. A section of UPs Chairs and Members are not acquainted with this notion. Some UP representative are resistant to embrace changes. A large number of UP representatives are unfamiliar on the roles and uses of information technologies.

Influences in the selection of entrepreneurs

According to key informants, there were instances where UP Chairs influenced the recruitment process by patronizing those candidates who were personally known them. In those cases, concerned UP Secretaries just followed or served the interests of those Chairs. Because of this anomaly some entrepreneurs had been recruited who were later found to the less skilled and could not provide public services properly.

Lack of investment for replacing idle equipment

During establishment the government gave necessary ICT equipment for the operations of UDCs. Being a public-private initiative it is expected that the entrepreneurs would meet operational cost and repair idle equipment from their regular earning. However, it is found that idea of public-private partnership is not clear to some entrepreneurs and they expect they the government and UPs would support them to buy new equipment and repair idle ones. Because of their such an expectation, a considerable number of equipment are left idle for a long time.

4.2 Challenges faced by UDCs

Slow Internet speed and network disruption

For internet connectivity, modem is the prime mode for an overwhelming majority of UDCs. However, internet connectivity through is not robust in many areas across the country. This is true mostly in remote areas of the country. For slow internet connectivity sometime operations of UDCs disrupt frequently and public services delayed. Though some UPs were connected with fiber-optic cable line, connection has been not made in operation yet. Sometimes, for birth registration central server is found congested for which registration process disrupts considerably and service recipients suffer from receiving quick services without much delay.

Load shedding, inadequate alternative power supply

Due to power shortages across the country, load-shedding is very frequency in rural areas. Apart from this, UDCs face power shortage that disrupt running of computers, printers and photocopy mechanism. However, there are solar panels in most of the UDCs as a source of alternative sources of powers. But, solar panel is not viable source for running printers and photocopiers because of their low voltages. Because of this condition sometimes service deliveries suffer and proper services cannot be delivered on time. However, in some areas there are other alternative sources that include generators, IPS etc.

Non-cooperation faced from UPs

Because of adequate safeguard, sometimes UP Chairs recruit new entrepreneurs in place of old ones before the completion of their tenure. Afterwards, those chairs try to persuade concerned UNO or Deputy Commissioner (DC) through use of some misleading information and resorting to pretext like showing old entrepreneurs absent etc.

Sometimes UP Chairs and Secretaries creates difficulties to entrepreneurs through demanding illegitimate share on UDCs' income. problems to operate UDC. There are instances where UP Secretaries to make profit by using the passwords of UDCs. Although as per circular, UPs should give preference to UDCs to their working buying paying market prices, some UP Secretaries do those works from outside computer shops bypassing UDCs. Thus, entrepreneurs were deprived of the profit. Moreover, in some cases, because of not enough personal understanding with UP secretary and Chair, entrepreneurs face obstacles in expanding their services and maximize their profits.

Insecurity regarding agreement with UPs

As the tenure of entrepreneurs is not permanent, in some cases agreement renewal depends on the wish and preference of newly elected chairmen. Moreover, short agreement tenure also poses reluctance among the entrepreneurs to make considerable investments. Due to non-investment to maintenance of equipment, some equipment (computer, photocopy machine, projector etc. of formation period) became idle in some UDCs.

Lack of publicity

It is evident that has been lack of adequate publicity strategies on UDCs' service provisions at local level from the end of entrepreneurs and UDC management committees. Because of limited publicity, local people have been less aware about the service provisions of UDCs and around 30 percentage of service recipient households received services from UDCs¹⁶. If service provisions can be expanded through proper publicity, income of UDCs would increase considerably.

UPs do their works free of cost

As per circular, UPs should give preference to UDCs to accomplish UPs' documentation and other works with their help. This would enhance UPs' administrative capacity and bring efficiency in their operations. Most of the cases, UPs engage them to prepare different master roll, photocopies of various office documents, take pictures of different safety- net beneficiaries etc. For doing so, UPs have to pay accordingly. However, it is found that some UPs accomplish such works with UDCs' help but they do not do pay for that. It is also alleged that some influential people aligned with political parties take services from UDCs but they do not pay for those services.

¹⁶ About 79.6% household members know the name of UDC but don't know the extent of its services (Survey on UDC, TIB, 2017).

4.3 Challenges faced by UNO Offices and District Administrations

Inadequate manpower

Because of the absence of Assistant Programmers at some upazillas, adequate technical support cannot be extended to UDCs located in those places. Besides, inadequate manpower at UNO office sometimes inhibits their physical visits to some UDCs.

4.4 Challenges faced by a2i Programme

Fragmented digitization

The a2i project under Prime Minister's Office has made tremendous contributions to make e-services available at the grassroots through operationalizing UDCs; equipping them with manpower, equipment, logistics, creating digital services; amassing support from various stakeholders etc. Despite these accomplishments, digital services through UDCs are still at nascent stage. Digital services are mostly fragmented not completely integrated digitalization. Such digitalization demands integration with other layers. For example – for online application for land record people have to go to UDCs and apply for land record through a digital system. In that case, people cannot receive a record instantly, rather the record would be sent through government postal service several days later and after that the applicant has to go the UDC again to collect the land record. Thus, digitalization of land record is still partial. More efforts and integration is required to service more simplified.

Fictitious information generation from UDCs

In some cases, UNO offices put pressure to entrepreneurs to report more income than the real one to the a2i prescribed online database¹⁷. Some UNOs indulge in such malpractices to exaggerate their efforts and demonstrate their excellence falsely. Besides, in some cases, entrepreneurs intentionally conceal real income to avoid UPs' pressure to share profit with them. All these create over and under reporting in UDCs performance and documentations. Thus, a2i programme authority would not be able to learn true performance and pictures of UDCs.

¹⁷ KIs of Entrepreneurs and UP Secretaries

Chapter Five

Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Conclusion:

The operations of UDCs have been less than a decade old. Given slow, unfriendly and inefficient traditional public services; they have immense potentiality to make positive changes in the livelihood of least served people at the grass-roots through bringing e-services to their door steps. The government has invested considerable amount in developing ICT platform for UDCs through delivering equipment, designing many online applications and imparting training to entrepreneurs and other stakeholders. Moreover, an enabling environment has been created through garnering support and creating ICT savvy mindset among policy level people, street level bureaucrats and local government institutions.

Thus, people have started getting various government, commercial and information services in a digital form and by spending less time, cost and visits. According to this research, one-third of the rural population took digitalized services from UDCs during January–December 2016. The research further demonstrates that chances of becoming victims of corruption have minimized as digital services reduced face to face interactions between service providers and recipients. On the other hand, transparency and accountability of UPs and other service providers would enhance as digital services ensure organized documentation and information management.

However, there are areas where further improvements can be done. Campaigns to popularize UDCs have been found to be less effective – a large section of people in remote areas are less informed about the presence of e-services at UDCs. People are found to be extremely unaware about newly introduced online services for passports and land records. Traditional campaign mediums like miking might have been confined in the vicinity of UDCs. Campaigned through TV and cable network might have failed to reach remote people presumably because of their limited of access to these mediums.

Most of the online applications are found to be fragmented. Complete online solutions are still absent. Resultantly, time, cost and visits for services are still higher for many services despite introduction of e-services. There is immense scope to simply applications integrating different layers of services and approval authorities. More explorations can be undertaken to introduce digital signatures for approving authorities and integration of payments with banking channels and card based payment with the help of internet.

Internet connectivity mostly dependent on internet modem which is found to be slow for delivering services. The government has started connecting UPs with fiber optic line for faster internet services. However, lines have been made operational in a small number of UDCs. Power shortages is major barrier for the delivery of a smooth services. Alternative power supplies have to be installed.

Social barriers against female entrepreneurs are quite prevalent. Sometimes, they face difficulties from their male counterparts. Families are reluctant to send their girls to become entrepreneurs. Sometimes, after their marriage female entrepreneurs move to their husbands' places and thus depart UDCs.

The real essence of public private partnership among a section of entrepreneurs are found absent. Some UDCs found to earn quite low. They are reluctant to develop their entrepreneurial skills. Sometimes, they do not invest to repair idle equipment and introduce new ones. For this reason, a considerable size of essential equipment is non-functional. Some are inclined to make UDCs as a fully commercial venture leaving aside their responsibilities to provide government services. Some of them want to be absorbed into government jobs.

There is a lack of ownership among a section UP representatives. They have been found not supportive enough and demand share from profits of UDCs. Even, they do not pay legitimate amount after engaging UDCs in doing administrative works. A major section of UP representatives is newly elected so they are not well aware about the necessity and efficacy UDCs.

5.2 Recommendations: Based on the findings of the study TIB put forward below recommendations for the considerations of policy makers and relevant stakeholders

5.2.1 Regarding policy reform and changes

1. For the better management of UDCs, below policies should be adopted in the circular issued by Local Government Division and accordingly recirculation it–
 - Transparent and competitive entrepreneur selection process
 - Provision to giving preference to technically proficient candidates
 - Longer term agreement tenure for the entrepreneurs
 - Profit distribution mechanism between the entrepreneurs
 - Conditions under which financial assistance from UPs can be given
 - Monitoring guideline for supervisory authorities
 - Standardization of service charges

5.2.2 To enhance UDCs' performance

2. Initiatives should be taken for the long term institutionalization of UDCs by assessing their potentiality and challenges
3. The extent and breadth of public services should be expanded uniformly in all UDCs in line with the main objectives of UDCs
4. Instant Power Supply (IPS) as alternative source of power should be installed for ensuring for uninterrupted power supply.
5. Internet access through optic fiber cable should be ensured as soon as possible for high speed internet connectivity.
6. Non-functional equipment should be replaced with new ones and old, erased and torn down information boards and banners should be replaced as well

7. Receipts against the government services should be given mentioning the government fees and service charge separately
8. Further simplification measures should be taken for complete and integrated digitalization of all public services. In this regard, digital signature might be introduced.
9. Orientation for understanding the essence of public-private partnership should be arranged to encourage the entrepreneur for necessary investment
10. Based on assessment necessary training should be organized for entrepreneurs so that they can deliver information services to service recipients

5.2.3 To strengthen the involvement of stakeholders

11. Campaign by miking, leaflet, yard-meeting, advertisement through cable network at local level and broadcast of TVC on BTV at national level should be arranged, especially the issues of cost minimization through taking services from UDCs
12. Orientation on UDCs and importance of e-service should be organized for the newly selected UP representatives.

Annexure

Annex 1: Establishment Year of Surveyed UDCs

Year of Establishment	Percentage of UDCs
2010	58.2
2011	35.2
2012	4.4
2015	2.2

Annex 2: Training received by Male Entrepreneurs

Type of Trainings	Percentage of Male Entrepreneurs
Basic Computer	91.1
MIS	75.2
Freelancing	47.5
Graphics Design	16.8
Web Development	14.9
National Web Portal	7.9
Others (ETIN, Agent Banking, Online Journalism, Online Bridge, Learning & Earning, ICT, Mobile Apps Development, Database Management, Digital Content Making)	10.9

Annex 3: Training received by Female Entrepreneurs

Type of Trainings	Percentage of Female Entrepreneurs
Basic Computer	86.1
MIS	62.5
Freelancing	33.3
Graphics Design	13.9
Web Development	4.2
National Web Portal	4.2
Others (ETIN, Agent Banking, HAZZ Registration)	5.6

Annex 4: Monthly Presence of Male Entrepreneurs in UDC

Presence	Percentage of Male Entrepreneurs
0 Day	2.0
1-7 Days	6.9
8-14 Days	1.0
15-21 days	6.9
22-28 Days	53.5
29-31 Days	29.7

Annex 5: Monthly Presence of Female Entrepreneurs in UDC

Presence	Percentage of Female Entrepreneurs
0 Day	14.8
1-7 Days	14.8
8-14 Days	10.0
15-21 days	29.6
22-28 Days	25.9
29-31 Days	4.9

Annex 6: Taking Assistance by Union Parishad from UDC

Types of Assistance	Percentage of UP
Compose and Sending Email	85.7
Compose Social Safety Net List	83.5
Compose Notice/Letter	81.3
Photocopy Document	65.9
Compose Verdict of Village Court	48.4
Projector rent	47.3
Others (Compose Beneficiary List, Resolution and Print, Maintain Accounts & Documentation, Rent Sound System, etc)	18.7

References

- *E-Governance in Bangladesh: Current Status and Way Forward Improving Service Delivery for e-Inclusion (30th May 2014)*; Subhash Bhatnagar, PhD Adjunct Professor, Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad, 30th May 2014, (LIRNEasia info@lirneasia.net | www.lirneasia.net)
- *REACHING THE UNREACHED?: AN ASSESSMENT OF UNION INFORMATION AND SERVICE CENTRES (UISC) IN BANGLADESH FROM BENEFICIARY PERSPECTIVE*; Md Gofran Faruqi, Proceedings of the Australian Academy of Business and Social Sciences Conference 2014 (in partnership with The Journal of Developing Areas) ISBN 978-0-9925622-0-5
- *AN ASSESSMENT OF E-GOVERNMENT: CASE STUDY ON UNION DIGITAL CENTRES (UDC) IN BANGLADESH*; Md Gofran Faruqi; Australian Journal of Sustainable Business and Society Volume 1; March 2015
- *Efficiency and Effectiveness of UISC*; Md.MasumAlam; Dept. of Public Administration, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet, Bangladesh