

Better Governance for Inclusive Growth: Bangladesh Perspective

1. Introduction

Bangladesh became an independent country in 1971 after a liberation war with Pakistan. Independence made it important to bring major reforms in the administrative system of the country. For this purpose, a number of Reform Commissions were formed but civil service has rarely achieved required efficiency providing services to the people. Those Commissions submitted numerous recommendations regarding rationalization of the civil service structure, efficiency, managerial dynamism, merit-based civil service, accountability etc. Besides Reform Commissions, different international development partners also raised issues as enhancing the level and nature of accountability and responsiveness; streamlining rules and regulations; maintaining an efficient, committed and professional civil service etc.

In public service delivery mechanism, citizens can be termed as customers. So the evaluation of people oriented service depends on the role and performance of civil service officers. Even in this open and globalized world, government sector plays the role of a catalyst instead of that of an interventionist. But being one of the least developed countries in the world, Bangladesh civil service officers still have to play an important role in different sectors. Many studies found that public satisfaction is very low with the quality of service they receive and the performance of public officials. Government is facing growing competition from the private sectors with more conscious citizens in relation to their rights. This is a major challenge that the Bangladesh Government has to overcome to uplift the Vision 2021.

Vision 2021 says 'Administration will be free from politicization and will be pro-people. Efficiency, seniority and merit will be the basis of appointment and promotion in public service. Administrative reform, right to information and e-governance will be introduced'. Thus, Vision 2021 sets a long development goal to ensure good governance and achieve economic growth in a way to establish Bangladesh as a middle-income country within a decade marked by the golden jubilee of independence.

2. Development Plan

The Vision 2021 and the associated Perspective Plan 2010-2021 have set solid development targets for Bangladesh by the end of 2021. Those targets if achieved will transform socio-economic environment of Bangladesh from a low income economy to a middle income economy. Along with higher per capita income, Vision 2021 lays down a development scenario where citizens will have

'a higher standard of living, will be better educated, will face better social justice, will have a more equitable socio-economic environment, and the sustainability of development will be ensured through better protection from climate change and natural disasters. The Bangladesh economy will be managed within the framework of a market economy with appropriate government interventions to correct market distortions, to ensure equality of opportunities, and to ensure equity and social justice for all'.

The implementation of Vision 2021 will be done through two medium term development plans, with the first spanning FY11-15. This Five Year Plan is the sixth in the cycle of development plans in Bangladesh which started in 1973.

3. Public Administration and Good Governance

UNDP gives the definition of Governance as 'it is the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences'. There are three key actors of its operation - state, market and civil society where executive branch of the government plays an important role to ensure the characteristics of it as one of the most important stakeholders in governance. Ministry of Public Administration is an important government agency in Bangladesh to promote good governance through administrative reforms in a way to ensure quality public service delivery.

Like most developing countries, the government of Bangladesh is the key provider of citizen services and public information, and the country's civil service is a government workforce ensuring delivery of these services effectively and efficiently. The success of laws and development policies promulgated by public representatives (politicians) lies in their implementation, the responsibility of which rests squarely on the shoulders of the civil service. The present civil service in Bangladesh was constituted first during the years of East India Company's rule which continued through Pakistan era and finally it was designated as Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) with minor modifications after the independence of Bangladesh.

After the emergence of Bangladesh, the Administrative and Services Reorganisation Committee proposed a structure of the country's civil service. But the proposal didn't come into light because of a change of government in August 1975. Later the Pay and Services Commission recommended a four-tier structure of services with 28 cadres, and the formation of the Senior Services Pool (SSP). Then two high level committees reviewed the cadre system, and abolished

the SSP in 1989. Presently the total number of cadres in the civil service in Bangladesh stands at 28.

In light of Vision 2021, the Government of Bangladesh is committed to make positive changes through reform in the civil administration to ensure good governance. With the objective of achieving inclusive growth, quality of service delivery by civil service needs to be upgraded and this mandate lies with MOPA which is responsible for upgrading the capacity of individuals and organisations within the civil service. To this effect it has already taken initiatives for formulating Public Service Act (PSA) including policies on promotion, transfer and placement, career planning, and Performance Based Evaluation System (PBES) for civil servants etc. The Ministry is also working on other initiatives including capacity development and e-governance through Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) at the field administration for ensuring quality education, improvement of service delivery to citizens and social awareness for combating corruption.

The details of the reform initiatives taken by the Ministry of Public Administration are stated below:

1. *Public Service Act (PSA)*

Formulating a Act for the civil servants has become a necessity to build a modern, effective, responsive, and service oriented civil service based on an institutionalized merit system operating within the sphere of laws and rules. With this in mind initiative to formulate a draft Civil Service Act (CSA) was taken in the year 2010. To reflect view and comments of all class of professionals, different cadre officials, journalists, NGO representatives and members of civil society at large a good number of seminars and workshops were held throughout the country and the draft CSA was finalized after incorporating their views. Later, government decided to formulate a new draft which not only apply to civil service, but also apply to the rest of the public service. To bring the whole public service under the umbrella of the draft Act, a new draft has been formulated namely Public Service Act (PSA).

2. *Performance Based Evaluation System (PBES)*

To replace the present ACR (Annual Confidential Report) system used for evaluating the officials, APR (Annual Performance Report) under Performance Based Evaluation System (PBES) has been approved to experimentally implement in the public service in three phases starting from MOPA in 2012, all other ministries in 2013 and the rest of the public service in 2014. Finally, it will be reviewed in December 2015 to finally implement it replacing the ACR. Ministry of Public

Administration is working to formulate job description, to provide training regarding the new system and to arrange workshops across the country to make the implementation successful.

3. Promotion Policy

There is no denying the fact that a well-defined promotion policy to ensure civil servants' well-timed promotion and career benefit is based upon performance; and the policy includes welfare and social security for civil servants well being in the society. This would help reduce an official's frustration on his services as well as enable and manage the progress of the civil servant towards being efficient, accountable and responsive. In addition to existing policy guidelines on promotion, a promotion policy is being prepared with the help of experts. Review on promotion policy is being continued.

4. Career Planning

An intensive career planning policy is needed for personnel management and development of the civil servant to be structured, transparent and accountable, as well as creative and responsive to service delivery. Career planning focuses on both individual and organizational performance management and development. It will aim to match the needs of the individual to organizational needs for both the posts that they currently hold and for future postings. Career planning policy will also address the employee's promotion and placement based on their performance appraisal and fair competition instead of only seniority. Linking training to the career is one of the major issues to be addressed in the reform process.

5. Reforming Field Administration

In the modern participatory management system, there is a need to reform field administration to increase organizational performance levels and improve pro-poor service delivery standards. This is because the field level officers play an important role to execute the decision made by the elected public representative. In order to reinvent field administration, e-governance through ICTs and new technologies play vital roles to ensure citizen's right to information addressing people's access to information and better service delivery to the citizens. The government has, by this time, promulgated Right to Information Act and the ICT Act 2009. In order to use ICTs, the government identifies critical service delivery areas such as land administration, issuing and renewal of passports and gun licenses, tax collection, monitoring of educational institutions, and citizen-centric sectors such as agriculture, health and education.

6. Reframing the role of the Ministry of Public Administration and its name

The Ministry of Public Administration (MOPA), evidently the regulating Ministry of all Ministries, plays a leading role in spearheading the modernization of the human resource management and development throughout the government. In pursuance of the idea, the name of the Ministry has been changed from Ministry of Establishment to MOPA with respect to its policy functions including development and management of a world class workforce in the field of administration so that the new name of the Ministry itself will explain its duties and responsibilities.

7. Clustering of Ministries

A number of clusters of ministries and Divisions have been made on the basis of their nature and relevance. All the ministries have been categorized into five broad types such as economic and planning, Human resources etc and officers will be posted accordingly considering their relevance to stay there for longer time so that specialization is attained.

8. Personnel Management Information System (PMIS)

Personnel Management Information System (PMIS) contains General Information, Educational Information, Posting Information, Foreign & Local Training, Promotion Information and Service History of civil servants. PMIS is used for Posting/Transfer of officers, Promotion of officers, Local and Foreign training of officers, Disciplinary actions etc. Now work is going on to extend the scope of PMIS to include data for all 27 BCS Cadre, enable individual staff members with suitable permissions to enter and amend his/her own PDS record, extend the existing PDS (and PMIS) to include additional data fields and to introduce an eight digit identification number for all officers in the new system.

9. E-file Management

The objective of the implementation of e-file management system is to improve efficiency, dynamism and transparency of the administrative process of the MoPA. Necessary hardware with modern training equipment has been established in the ministry to enhance the ICT operating condition and capacity of MoPA through interior renovation of data center and an ICT training room. E-file management has already been piloted in the Career Planning and Training (CPT) Wing of the ministry. It will be rolled out gradually.

10. Implementation of citizen charter

Article 21 of Bangladesh Constitution clearly stated the duties of the both sides: citizens and public servants’:

(1) It is the duty of every citizen to observe the Constitution and the laws, to maintain discipline, to perform public duties and to protect public property.

(2) Every person in the service of the Republic has a duty to strive at all times to serve the people.

Thus, together with the ‘citizens and public servants’ we can contribute these ‘duties’, considering with mutual trust, collaboration, respect, understanding, a willingness to listen to each other as equals. These are some of the basic values of the Citizen's Charter Initiative.

To improve the quality of service delivered by civil servants, government has taken program so that service providing organizations throughout the country introduce citizen charter in their respective offices. To make it more people oriented participation of grass root people in the preparation of citizen charter has been encouraged. It has been termed as second generation citizen charter as it is based on peoples’ participation and not an imposed one from the top.

a) Sustainability of Citizen’s Charter

Participation of local community in the formulation; organizational supervision and periodical review; grievance redressing; coordination among different same field offices; establishing a focal point in the ministry concerned and specifying the responsibility regarding citizen's charter are helpful to ensure the sustainability of Citizen's Charter in Bangladesh.

b) Role of Central Administration in Implementation of Citizen’s Charter

Role of central administration is very important to implement citizen's charter throughout the country because of capacity gap in field administration. Job rotation of field level officers creates a problem of adjustment in learning process. To overcome these problems, central administration plays an influential role in the implementation and monitoring of citizen's charter.

c) Commitment to ensure Quality Public Service Delivery

The Members of the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) are keen to better serve the country through constant ‘renewal and innovations.’ They have introduced initiatives such as the Citizen’s Charter,

e-service, Front Desk Service, Public Hearing and working together with the community, civil society organizations, the media and other stakeholders. The ongoing implementation of Citizen's Charter by MoPA is a clear indication that Bangladesh Civil Service wants to establish a **transparent, accountable, efficient and effective service delivery** in the country.

d) *Second Generation Citizen's Charter*

Second Generation Citizen's Charter has been prepared through interaction between civil society and public servants. This upholds the values to decide democratically what services people need and how the civil service can best supply these services. Engaging citizens in decision making procedure has a major impact on their daily life. It makes civil service more responsive to citizens' needs and circumstances and it established a benchmark to which delivery (and the capacity of delivery) by the civil service can be measured.

4. Statistics of Public Sector Officers and Staff

According to the *Statistics of Civil Officers and Staff, 2010*, breakdown of existing civil officers and staff is given below:

Class	Ministries/ Divisions	Departments/ Directorates	Divisional/Deputy Commissioner's Offices	Autonomous Bodies/ Corporation	Total
Class-I	2,161	51,594	1,604	48,417	1,03,776
Class-II	1,874	21,121	88	30,505	53,588
Class-III	2,252	5,82,925	12,484	87,301	6,84,962
Class-IV	2,281	53,410	14,472	65,593	2,35,756
Total	8,568	8,09,050	28,648	2,31,816	10,78,082

Total approved posts for all classes is 13,21,749 while 2,43,667 posts are vacant according to the publication mentioned above.

Breakdown of policy level civil service officers is given below:

Post	Total	Male	Female
Senior Secretary/Secretary	49	47	2
Additional Secretary	266	249	17
Joint Secretary	623	545	78

(as on 22 August 2012; source: PACC)

5. Achievements in ensuring inclusive growth

Over the past 40 years since independence, Bangladesh has increased its real per capita income by more than 130 percent and reduced poverty rate by sixty percent. As Bangladesh is highly populated country and large population is a burning issue of socio-economic development, remarkable achievements also include reducing total fertility rate from 7.0 to 2.7 and increasing life expectancy from 46.2 years to 66.6. Even with a high population and natural calamity Bangladesh increased the rate of economic growth from an average rate of 4% in the 1970s to 6% in the 2000s and increasing the savings and investment rates from below 10 percent each in the 1970s to 24 percent (investment rate) and 30 percent (savings rate) in FY10. Bangladesh has achieved gender parity in primary and secondary education.

The economy today is lot more flexible and resilient, as indicated by the ability to withstand the global financial crisis with minimum adverse effects. Bangladesh also is now much more capable of handling natural disasters with minimum loss of life. Bangladesh achieved this remarkable progress with development despite numerous internal and external constraints. Bangladesh has formulated National Report on Sustainable Development for an integrated, inclusive process involving economic, social and environmental aspects to meet the future challenges. Bangladesh has also formulated National Women Development Policy 2011 to address the gender perspective in socio-economic development highlighting gender disparity, better opportunity for women and access to equal wellbeing.

After being a member in the WTO, Bangladesh has significantly increased its foreign currency earning through bargaining capability in multilateral and bilateral trade negotiations, diversifying export sector and expanding the destination of Bangladeshi products. Government of Bangladesh has tried to become a leader of the global labour market by transforming unskilled and semi-skilled labour to skilled labour based on the need assessment of the labour market. Bangladesh has also

unfolded new labour markets through negotiations with foreign counterparts to ensure sustainable remittances. Bangladesh has taken necessary steps to simplifying the remittance system with some incentives which resulted the expatriates to send home more money and thus, this sector has become a thriving foreign currency earning source now.

Notwithstanding this past progress, the Government recognizes that Bangladesh is still a low income country with substantial poverty, inequality and deprivation. An estimated 47 million people are living below the poverty line with a significant proportion living in households which are female headed, in remote areas, and consisting of socially excluded and other vulnerable people. Most of the labour force is engaged in informal low productivity and low income jobs.

To ensure inclusive growth, it is inevitable to ensure good governance. For this purpose, Bangladesh is working for reframing the public administration which will be more pro-people and efficient in public service delivery.

6. Conclusion

The civil service of Bangladesh is responsible for policy making function of the country. In order to reinvent government, reforming the Civil Service is a must. But this reform is a huge task and a continuous process. It is not possible to bring about changes overnight and an incremental reform process is essential. It is important to focus on specific issues on the basis of the short-term, mid-term and long-term initiatives.

In order to ensure sustainability of socio-economic development, long-term initiatives will be needed such as informing and actively engaging citizens and making them aware of the roles and responsibilities of service providing institutions, engaging field offices in launching advocacy and campaign programs, capacity development of service providing institutions, developing strong monitoring mechanism at the national and local levels.