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An Act in the Making: for the People, with the People

Peter van de Pol

In accordance with the Constitution, a Bill has been drafted that will regulate the civil service. This draft Civil Service Act purports, on the one hand, to regulate the relations between the civil service and the government and citizens, and on the other hand, lay down the rules by which human resources and some of the organisational structures will be managed.

The draft Bill consist of three main parts: a Preamble, which states explicitly that the role of the civil service is to serve the people of Bangladesh in a pro-people, transparent and effective way; the Act itself, which provides a broad framework; and, last but certainly not least, the Rules section, where the specifics of the main articles of the Act will be worked out. Especially the latter section, which deals with such diverse topics such as Performance Based Evaluation, Grievance Redress Mechanisms, and the Clustering of Ministries, are of the utmost importance.

The draft Bill is the product of a year of internal deliberations, comparative analysis with similar kinds of Acts, both from the region as well as farther afield, and consultations with experts. However, before the Bill is finalised and put up for discussion at Parliament, the Government of Bangladesh has made the crucial decision to go for wide ranging public consultations. Moreover, it has set a system in place to absorb and incorporate all the useful feedback it receives.

The future Civil Service Act does not only concerns public officers. For certain, issues such as transfer, promotion, placement and training as quintessential Human Resource Management topics that will grab the intention of individual civil servants. But everybody in Bangladesh has a stake in this Act. The way the Bangladesh Civil Service operates, how it intends to be pro-people, professional and accountable, and how it will tackle thorny issues such as graft, politicization and abuse of public power, will have an immense impact upon the daily life of all citizens, whether rich or poor.

In recognition of this fact, Cabinet and the Ministry of Public Administration (MoPA) have initiated the unprecedented step of publishing the draft Bill on its website, including the facility to give feedback, suggestions and recommendations. Moreover, MoPA has toured the country, organising at each division stakeholders meetings (one for public officers and one for civil society), inviting discussion and dialogue on all elements of the draft Bill. It has led by example by organising a Civil Service Act workshop at MoPA itself. It has welcomed independent initiatives by civil service and civil society organisations to come up with ideas, suggestions and improvements. In the coming weeks, it will organise a National Conference on the draft Bill.

This pledge to stakeholder engagement and people's participation is not just mere rhetoric. MoPA has set up two committees, of which one is explicitly dedicated to the processing and incorporation of the literally thousands of feedback, suggestions and recommendations it has received into the final draft. The second committee, on the Formulation of the Rules, will make use of the same feedback. The future of the Bangladesh Civil Service is an important part of the future of Bangladesh. It concerns each and everybody. In order to become truly pro-people, the public service has to step out of the door of its office, onto the street and talk to the people. The intense nation-wide public consultations, initiated by the civil service itself, are a clear and unparalleled indicator that the civil service is reaching out to the people. With the help of the people, the final Act will be a better Act, and a huge and crucial step towards a truly pro-people, Bangladeshi, 21st century civil service has been made that cannot be reversed.

Peter van de Pol, Project Manager CSCMP

Improving Service Delivery at the DC Office

Anir Chowdhury

Public service delivery in Bangladesh remains largely framed through century-old processes that are labour and time-intensive for both service providers and seekers. Predominantly a paper-based system that is often inflexible, it not only creates frequent delays, but also gives rise to corruption and abuse. It can also prohibit or limit access by the poor, marginalized and vulnerable.

As part of the government's Digital Bangladesh vision, Ministries across the government have been devising innovative ways to improve the efficiency, accessibility and transparency of public service delivery. The Access to Information programme (A2I) at the Prime Minister's Office with technical support from UNDP has been assisting the government in this endeavour. The District e-Service Centre at Jessor DC Office is one such innovation deployed in collaboration with several government agencies such as the Cabinet Division, Ministry of Public Administration and Bangladesh Computer Council. This centre is being replicated to all 64 DC offices and more than ten districts have already launched it by May 2011.

WHAT IS A DISTRICT E-SERVICE CENTRE?

The first District e-Service Centre is located at the Jessor Deputy Commissioner's office. It is primarily a one-stop service point for specialized services of DC office that is government owned and run. Services available at the DC office can be requested and accessed either online, by phone, or by post. Government officers are also ready to receive applications and official letters from citizens over-the-counter at the centre.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

SUBMISSION: Citizens can submit applications and official letters in three ways: Over-the-counter, by post, and online at the Jessor District Portal (www.djessore.gov.bd). Service applications and applicants' details are recorded on e-Centre computers. Details are sent, online, to relevant officials, and applicants provided with a receipt and tracking number, to follow their applications through the process. Applications can also be submitted from the office of Upazila Nirbahi Officers, removing the need to travel to District HQ.

Citizens who provide their information online instantly receive a receipt with their 'Receive Number' both online, as well as to their mobile phones by SMS.

PROCESSING: Government officers log into a password-protected system and access a dashboard where they view their day's task lists, as well as those of their colleagues. Case files sent to government officers include relevant case information, including case history up to that point. An officer cannot forward applications to other officers without making the required preliminary decision. Once processing of an application is complete, all notes and decisions regarding the case are stored in hard copy in the main file.

TRACKING: Citizens in Jessor can call the dedicated e-Centre numbers (0421-65044 or 01753171797) and track the status of their applications by giving their 'Receive Numbers'. They can also track the status through SMS to 16345 (presently limited Teletalk subscribers with other operators to be included soon). Citizens can use the online Jessor District Portal to track the status of applications

COPIES OF RECORDS: All applications for certified copies of land records are entered into the e-Centre's computers. In case of any change in the delivery date, applicants are notified through SMS. Citizen then have 30 days to send the required fee to the DC Office from any Bank. Once this fee is received, applicants receive the delivery date. Citizens can also receive certified copies of land records by post by sending a self-addressed envelope along with the fee.

WHAT IMPACT DOES IT HAVE?

The Jessor District e-Service Centre currently provides 147 services across 27 categories. This has transformed the DC office from a static and often lethargic point of service request to a responsive one-stop shop. Categories of services that have proved most popular in this early phase included: certified copies of public records from District Record Rooms; land related complaints and redress services; applications related to civil suits; general complaints and redress; freedom fighter services; public examination; grants and payments by local trusts; licenses; NGO affairs; disaster relief services; and food, seed, and fertilizer related agricultural services.

The availability of services like these has dramatically increased citizen's access. But the benefit is beyond simple access issues, and is reaching into areas of empowerment and good governance. Through the Jessor model, citizens, especially women, are now able to deal with Government officers directly in an environment that is more comfortable and respectable. Petty corruption, which is rife at lower tiers of administration and which has traditionally been a major source of frustration has been reduced by cutting out the middleman. Women and elderly citizens no longer have to travel to District HQ from their villages but rather get services through postal services which have cut down on unnecessary expenses and wasted time.

The core benefits of the District e-Service Centres can be categorised in the following ways:

Expanded Access: The availability of online and postal submission (in addition to over-the-counter) reduces the time and money it takes citizens to submit, track and receive a service. The number of applications that have been received over the internet is expected to grow rapidly with more publicity and as the Union Information and Service Centres are

engaged more actively in submitting applications online. This increase in access has also meant a breaking down barriers of culture, class and distance in the delivery of public services.

Accountability and Transparency: The tracking systems increase accountability and transparency in the delivery of public services. Citizens can see exactly where their application is and can demand services. Government officers are better held to account for services, a transformation that puts the onus of delivery squarely on their shoulders. The Performance Management Dashboard is a key component. Officers can track performance of officers down in the hierarchy. Cabinet Division and Ministry of Establishment can track performance of all officers at the DC office.

Improved Efficiency: Century-old processes have been transformed from heavily bureaucratic, manual model, to an ICT-enabled model, cutting layers of red-tape, and time spent on finding files.

This small and 'under the radar' initiative has the potential to break the 'vicious cycle' of inefficiency and corruption by prompting gradual changes in service production processes. Already, the traditional process of provided certified copies of land record has changed. Now, every record that is supplied is also digitized. In the long term this means digitization of all active land records.

The table below shows a comparison of the scenarios before and after the District e-Service Centre was introduced. It clearly show a productivity gain of 50-80%.

Service Description	Before	After
Avg. number: requests received for certified copy of land records/day	150-200	230-240
Avg. number: requests processed for certified copy of land records/day	120-130	180-200
Avg. time: DC disposal of applications	3-4 hrs up to 1 day Max.	1 hr
Avg. time: decision making (full cycle)	2 - 7 days	1 hr to 2 days
Total number: applications received online	0 (no provision)	16,000 in 5 months
Total number: applications received by post	0 (no provision)	400 in 5 months

The Access to Information Programme, along with Cabinet Division and Ministry of Public Administration, is working to introduce upazila level e-services by the end of 2011. The supplement in 2012 will hopefully cover the benefits of those services.

Anir Chowdhury is the Policy Adviser, Access to Information (A2I) Programme at the Prime Minister's Office supported by UNDP



Establishing BCS Women's Network.

Women constitute nearly half of the total population and half of its potential. Appointment of women in Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) and their inclusion in different cadres is very significant and needs special consideration from various perspectives. Bangladesh inherited the civil service system developed in Pakistan, which was a legacy of Indian Civil Service (ICS). No women entered the ICS up to 1935. Women started joining the mainstreaming of the civil service since early 80s following a strong commitment to advance women in employment and economic opportunity as well as decision making. Despite the fact that the Government of Bangladesh has taken formal measures to ensure gender equality in the BCS through various policies and strategies, the representation of women, particularly at top management and decision making level is yet to be satisfactory. The total female participation in all classes of civil service is only 10 percent. In a class wise comparison, the female participation is highest in class III (12%) and lowest in class IV (6%). Women participation is more or less same in class I and Class II posts which constituted 8% of the total strength of their respective group (Kashem et.al., 2002:35). Furthermore a number of women at higher level including in positions such as Deputy Secretary, Joint Secretary, Additional Secretary and Secretary, is not significant. However, this is more than an understanding that representation of women in the Civil Service is needed for the national interest. Bangladesh as a developing country has to utilize its available human resources. The widespread exclusion of half of the country's human resources from institutions of governance underscore the need to continue the search for development and ways of assuring people-centered sustainable development. The Constitution of Bangladesh, Section-3 of Article-29 states that:

- There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in respect of employment or office in the service of the Republic.
- No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of any employment or office in the service of the Republic.
- Nothing in this Article shall prevent the state from, making special provisions, in favor of any backward section of citizens for the purpose of securing their adequate representation in the service of the Republic.

Article-4 of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) also stated that, it will not be treated as discriminations, if the state parties take special measures for equality between male and female.

Against this backdrop, an initiative has been undertaken by the Ministry of Public Administration to establish a BCS women network with following objective to:

- Build up cooperation, unity and harmony among the members and encourage them to work for country and nations with highly professional skill.
- Make a platform to protect rights of women according to Constitution, related to policies and work environment.
- Preserve the list of retired person to help them in social welfare work, to invite them in any appropriate ceremony, to make a proper communication with their family members;
- Develop professional skills of members;
- Make a network with all national and international organization related to public administration on the described objectives.
- Sensitize stakeholders on creating enabling environment for men and women working together for national development.

Why BCS Women's Network

An association comprised of top women managers and junior officers in the Civil service is mutually beneficial for women advancement in the civil service, guiding future generation for ensuring equality in the rights and entitlement and advancement in the civil service delivery mandate of the public administration. It is a platform where needs for improvement in the service conditions for women, respect and tolerance for both women and men in the service and creating an enabling environment in the civil service for both women and men to provide service to people. In addition, it creates a platform for women civil servants to voice their needs and demands for addressing challenges together. It is expected that the BCS Women Network serves as an avenue through which women can contribute knowledge and experience as civil servants in an organised manner to reform and improve service delivery to the citizens.

What We Have Already Done

Registration of the BCS Women Network is in progress; related activities as follows have been undertaken; To being stronger and effective BCS women Network we have done following;

Constitution : Drafting BCS Women Network Constitution.
 Executive committee : Executive Committee has been proposed.
 Office : A temporary office for has been set up at BIAM Foundation.
 Focal points : Cadre based Focal Points have been nominated from 28 cadres.

BCS Women's Network

BIAM Foundation (4th floor), 63 New Eskaton, Dhaka.

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Secretary
 Ministry of Public Administration
 Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Message

"Transformative leadership in public administration and innovation in governance: creating a better life for all" is the main theme to celebrate today the 23rd June 2011, the Public Service Day declared by the UN General Assembly. Objectives of the day are to celebrate public service in the community, recognize the work of public servants, and encourage careers in public service.

I am pleased to convey the highest commitment of the government in leading the change management in the civil service that resulted in opening up the draft Civil Service Act for public consultation and naming of the Ministry of Public Administration with its vision and mission. Entire Public Administration of Bangladesh celebrates Public Service Day 2011 to recognize the institutional contribution made by public servants to enhance the role, professionalism, image and visibility of public service, and also to recognize the value and virtue of service to the community.

On the occasion of this august celebration, we, as humble civil servants of the country, sincerely vow to uphold our commitment that the civil servants of Bangladesh will contribute more significantly towards making this country a happy, prosperous and safer one.

I, heartily wish the outstanding success of the Public Service Day 2011.


 Iqbal Mahmood



Additional Secretary, MoPA
 National Project Director, CSCMP
 Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Message

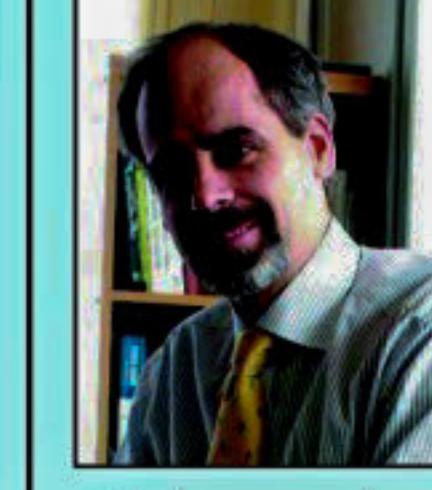
Today, the 23rd June 2011, the Ministry of Public Administration celebrates the International Public Service Day. We do so by acknowledging the efforts of public servants, and by aiming at enhancing the capacity of civil servants to innovate and improve performance, so that they meet public demand for improved service delivery.

This year, we are celebrating the day with a desire to focusing on transformative management and innovation in public service. The ultimate focus is to build the capacity of civil servants so that they are prompt in anticipating and responding, in a collaborative and innovative way, to the many pressing challenges of this century that include poverty eradication, ensuring basic quality education and freedom from corruption.

Now a days, citizens are actively engaged in public decision making processes, and in public service delivery, there is an increased sense of ownership and thus greater sustainability of public initiatives. Considering this increasing accountability of both public servants and citizens, the Ministry of Public Administration has been implementing citizen's charter initiatives in 14 districts engaging citizens in dialogue with service providers for improvement in service delivery. We believe engaging citizens would enable the public service promoting good governance and contributing to accountability of the government towards its citizens.

On this special day, I strongly believe our civil servants will do their best to meet the present needs for improvement of service delivery and make the celebration a success.


 Md. Abubakar Siddique



UNDP Country Director in Bangladesh

Message

Each year on June 23rd we celebrate International Public Service Day --- an occasion to recognize, commend and encourage exemplary public service and celebrate the tremendous value and virtue of public service to the community. This year's theme of "Transformative Leadership in Public Administration and Innovation in Governance: Creating a Better Life for All" is, I believe, particularly appropriate for Bangladesh, and I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate all the innovative and dedicated public servants of Bangladesh, who have contributed to transforming the lives of millions across this country for the better.

Such changes in people's lives, innovations in technology, and the global commitment to tackling fundamental tests together, have given great hope to many here and across the globe. But at the same time, this changing context brings with it unprecedented challenges, particularly for public service leaders both here in Bangladesh and all over the world, who now face a multiplicity of interconnected issues that are both global and local at once. From the rapidly changing and growing needs of populations, to newer global challenges such as financial crisis or climate change, to the demand for higher quality of services, demands on our public service leaders have never before been what they are today.

Meeting these new challenges requires new beginning- to meet these challenges we need transformational leaders. Leaders who can "transform" the minds and hearts of people to enlarge vision, insight, and understanding that will bring about permanent and self-perpetuating positive change for all. Leaders who will think well outside the proverbial box and not be constrained by the established practices, roles, and procedures. Leaders who embrace 'innovation' using creative problem solving to find new ways of thinking and doing things differently to achieve desired results, even when a large part of the system is already fixed.

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