

Case Study Series: Learning from Innovative Civil Servants

Case Title:

Using Efficient Technology for Environmental Surveillance

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The cases for this series are collected by interviewing the civil servants working in different South Asian countries. This collection initiative is an attempt to document different innovative initiatives taken by different civil servants and encourage other civil servants to be more proactive and innovative through the ideas of these cases. If you know of any innovative case, then please send us an email (farin.ritu@northsouth.edu), we will communicate with you for further details.

Case 7: Using Efficient Technology for Environmental Surveillance

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Lack of environmental surveillance

Illegal timber smuggling, hill cutting, and stone fetching are detrimental to the environment. The remote hilly forest areas of Bangladesh bear the brunt of such anthropogenic environmental degradation. For years, this problem has been lingering as law enforcers cannot apprehend the perpetrators due to faulty environmental surveillance.

Mr. X is a civil servant. He was once posted in a remote hilly forest Upazila (sub-district) as an Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO). After his posting, he came to know from the locals about various problems like cutting trees and hills and collecting stones illegally. He tried to stop them by conducting various in-person operations, but most of the time the perpetrators used to evade the officials and escape the scene, so he could not apprehend them.

Personal initiative to use technology

After a few days, Mr. X bought a drone camera for personal use. It had a range of 8 KM and could fly about 800 feet high. A thought came across his mind that he could use that drone camera for environmental surveillance. So, to test its efficacy, he started flying the drone in areas notoriously known for tree and hill cutting. The perpetrators became afraid after seeing the drone camera due to its sound while it flies. Then they escaped that area due to the fear of being caught. One day he also seized some stacks of stones dug by them from hill cutting.

So, after some successful test attempts, he started to fly the drone regularly out of his personal initiative to increase vigilance. He informed his higher authority (District Administration) about the purpose of using the drone and also made the general people aware of its activities. He used to fly it thrice a day, morning, noon, and evening to intimidate the culprits. In this way, during the 3 years of his tenure, he continued the surveillance

Problem

For years, due to faulty surveillance, some perpetrators have been damaging the environment by cutting down trees, destroying hills and collecting stones illegally.

Solution

The civil servant used an efficient technology, i.e., his personal drone camera, for environmental surveillance.

Outcome

Technology-based surveillance system can reduce environmental degradation.

using drones. The drone surveillance, particularly, the sound of it and the pictures captured by it, helped him to monitor crime, enforce law and order in his area and save the environment. In this way, he was able to reduce the amount of deforestation and hill cutting to some extent in that area. This kind of self-initiated technology-based surveillance system can be used to increase environmental surveillance and reduce environmental damage. It can be replicated in other areas of Bangladesh too.

Declarations

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