

Case Study Series 1 : Learning from Innovative Civil Servants

Case 11:

Case Title: Making Corruption Difficult: Ensuring Transparency in Constituency-wise Block Allocations through Proactive Public Disclosures

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The case studies for this series are collected from real-life cases of civil servants working in different South Asian countries. This collection initiative is an attempt to document different proactive approaches taken by civil servants and, in the process, encourage other civil servants to become more proactive in their own workplaces. If you know of other such instances of proactive acts, please email us (afariha121@gmail.com), and we will get back to you to collect more information.

Making Corruption Difficult: Ensuring Transparency in Constituency-wise Block Allocations through Proactive Public Disclosures

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Constituency-wise Parliamentary Block Allocation and Poor Governance

In Bangladesh, the Members of Parliament (MPs) receive constituency-wise funds from the national budget for local development projects, as outlined in the Annual Development Programme (ADP). The MPs choose projects with input from local councils like Upazila (Sub-districts) or Union Parishads (Union Councils), focusing on infrastructure, health, education, and welfare.

However, challenges like weak supervision, political influence, and potential misuse of funds impact this process. Since the MPs oversee these projects and handle related complaints, they may overlook or even support irregularities for personal gains, allowing nepotism and corruption to spread locally. This mismanagement ultimately wastes public funds and benefits only a selected few.

Over the years, the Government of Bangladesh has taken several initiatives to enhance transparency and accountability, including the Right to Information (RTI) Act, Grievance Redress System (GRS), and Citizens Charters. However, these measures have faced obstacles in effectively curbing corruption, largely due to low public awareness and inconsistent implementation. While these top-down initiatives often struggle to make a significant impact, there are instances of innovative approaches led by individual government officials that offer promising results.

Prioritizing Proactive measures over Reactionary ones

The Deputy Commissioner (DC), Mr. X noticed a troubling rise in corruption and mismanagement of block allocations. To tackle this, he devised a strategic plan. After meeting with the MPs to discuss the disbursement of funds, he took the bold step of sharing the meeting minutes with the press, including the specific projects and financial allocations. Once the newspapers published this data, citizens across various constituencies became aware of the funding breakdown. In the following months, whenever irregularities arose such as a public infrastructure project being absent despite being in the disbursement plan, the locals would approach the authorities to demand accountability. This demand-driven approach effectively held the authorities accountable and led to a substantial reduction in corruption.

Problem

Lack of effective monitoring system in the utilization of constituency-wise funds has led to misuse of public resources.

Solution

Sharing meeting minutes regarding the disbursement of funds (including specific projects and financial allocations) with the newspapers.

Outcome

Public awareness of constituency allocations improves, leading to increased scrutiny, making it more difficult to commit corruption.

Unlike the usual practice of reacting to media reports after discrepancies surface, Mr. X chose a proactive path by making the information public upfront, before any issues emerged. This transparency made corrupted practices among the MPs difficult, and significantly improved the efficiency in resource disbursement.

Declarations

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