



SIPG

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Innovative Solutions for Effective Governance and Public Services

Case 7

Securing Fair Access: Transforming Safety Net Card Distribution in Bangladesh with a Digital Database

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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 attempts to document different innovative solutions for effective governance and public services. If you know of other such instances of acts, please email us (afariha121@gmail.com), and we will get back to you to collect more information.

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Inefficiencies in Safety Net Card Allocation and Governance Challenges

In Bangladesh, Safety Net Programs help the vulnerable, such as the elderly or the underprivileged households. However, inefficiencies and mismanagements develop with the issuance of safety net cards. The cards are intended to help those in the highest need, but they are often distributed by elected officials, who occasionally prioritize their networks over deserving individuals. The absence of an efficient and accountable system gives rise to the misuse of resources and affects equitable support for the most vulnerable in the society. While these deep-rooted governance issues are not new in Bangladesh and are usually overlooked, Mr. Y attempted to devise a solution after encountering the problem.

A Systematic Solution: Introducing Accountability in Safety Net Card Allocation

While conducting an inspection at a Union Parishad (the lowest local government body in Bangladesh), Mr. Y met an elderly beggar who had never received the old age allowance and was unaware of its existence. After further inquiry, he discovered that while some households held multiple Safety Net Cards, approximately 1,500 deserving individuals had been left out of the Safety Net Programs. Over four months, he took the initiative to create a digital database that linked each Safety Net Card to an individual's National Identification (NID) number, ensuring a card could only be assigned to one person. This process aimed to curb duplications and ensure that assistance reached those most in need. Mr. Y also took an inclusive approach by hiring the local youths, aged 14 to 15, to handle the data entry, providing them with employment opportunities, and engaging the community in the solution.

PROBLEM

Inefficiencies in Safety Net Card distribution due to mismanagement led to the misuse of resources, hindering equitable support for vulnerable populations in Bangladesh.

SOLUTION

Creating a digital database linking Safety Net Cards to individuals' National Identification (NID) numbers to ensure unique card allocation and curb duplications.

OUTCOME

Efficient resource utilization and public service delivery, while offering support to a significant number of deserving individuals.

Overcoming Obstacles and Nationwide Adoption

Mr. Y's work, like many other reform efforts, was met with opposition, particularly from the elected local representatives. As it affected their prior mismanagement and diminished their power, they questioned whether the project was government-approved or not. To alleviate the tension, Mr. Y handled the issue strategically. While handing out cards, he credited the local representatives, positioning them as the program's advocates. This effectively diffused opposition and contributed to community support.

As Mr. Y's program proved to be successful, the government eventually adopted the technique on a nationwide scale. Later on, 136 sub-districts adopted the system. This proactive governance strategy not only enhanced the allocation process but also contributed to a culture of accountability and efficiency in public service delivery.



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