

Strengthen Policy & Guidelines on Performance Monitoring, Rewards System, and Coordination within the Civil Service: the Bangladesh Story¹

Core Issue: Internal Strategy Building, Coordination, and Proactive Engagement within the Civil Service (Civil Service Reform)

The Story

In line with the pledge to prioritize the achievement of the MDGs, the Government of Bangladesh has made a number of decisions to strengthen its poverty reduction programmes. The Planning Commission was mandated to manage resources to programmes, projects, and sectors mandated for poverty reduction. In addition the Ministry of Finance was identified as the initiator of the Medium Term Budgetary framework (MTBF), to guarantee that the process and actual formulation of the budget at the macro level and ministry levels be based on the existing policies and match national priorities to achieve the MDGs. However, the planning process was weakened due to a lack of fundamental economic tools and there was no mechanism for coordination among relevant stakeholders and policy makers. Based on these shortcomings, it was decided to conduct an assessment of the General Economic Division, as the National Poverty Focal Point (NPPF).

While the Planning Cells/ Wings in each ministry is responsible for the planning of the overall strategy, and coordinating sectoral strategies and activities, the task of monitoring belongs to the GED of the Ministry of Planning, as the NPPF. As the focal point, GED is responsible for: collating official data on Poverty Reduction Strategy monitoring; coordinating monitoring efforts within and outside the Government; facilitating effective resolution of debates on indicators and methodologies and developing new indicators where necessary; undertaking relevant research and studies in collaboration with independent academic/research institutions and civil society groups; and facilitating feedback of outcome monitoring into policy-making.

It was found that the absence of coordination mechanisms between GED and the Planning Cells/Wings, and between GED and other government agencies continued to affect not only GED's monitoring efforts but also data collection and analysis for the country's Poverty Reduction Strategies. In addition, due to the cadre system in the broader civil service at the policy level, there was a high rate of staff rotation, negatively influencing staff morale in all of the five wings within the GED. The Joint Chief and Deputy Chief of each wing also saw themselves moving to different postings after a few years.

An overall approach for internal strategy building and coordination, and proactive engagement with other government agencies in the coordination, planning, data analysis and monitoring of MDGs and PRS Targets is envisaged to strengthen the capacities of both the GED and the Planning Wings/Units of ministries. This approach is also be backed by long-term policy support to strengthen the civil service in general, particularly on the issue of tenure, incentives and performance management for civil servants in GED and the

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Planning Wings/Units. The overall recommended approach encompassing the larger civil service and GED itself is captured in the following steps:

1. Strengthen policy and operational guidelines on performance monitoring and rewards system within the civil service. In this particular case, performance monitoring refers not only to individual performance, but group/organizational performance as well. In addition, a number of non-monetary incentives mentioned above may be adapted and introduced at the organizational level (i.e., within GED and the Planning Wings). This would lead to the **introduction of a long-term human resource development (HRD) framework to guide the career advancement of officers and staff members in GED and Planning Wings.** Currently, the cadre system seems to offer the opportunity for career advancement within the Bangladesh civil service through cadre postings and tenural rotations. This also contributes to frequent staff rotations, as some staff members preferred to get transferred out of GED/Planning Wings immediately to avail of higher post levels in other related agencies.

2. Strengthen reporting and monitoring of development projects and activities across government agencies. GED has the primary responsibility not only to understand the country's poverty needs and situation, but also to know what the government and its partners are actually doing about it. It entails full understanding of poverty/MDG issues, digging beyond the statistics, ensuring that all programmes, projects and activities that are taking place in the country in the name of the MDGs and poverty alleviation are actually working and working together, and learning from the experiences in these projects.

3. Enhance coordination of government policy for collecting, consolidating and ensuring usage of MDG/poverty data and statistics. Existing modalities to collect and share data/information needs to be strengthened. There must be a central depository of MDG-related data and information to facilitate easy access.

The approach above can be further broken down to specify strategies for GED:

- ✓ Internal Visioning and Strategy Building including Building Organizational Competency and Credibility by demonstrating quality outputs and results including curriculum on important issues such as macroeconomic analysis and gender mainstreaming.
- ✓ Convening Regular Policy Dialogues with Stakeholders to showcase the competencies of officers and staff members of the Planning Wings, but as importantly will provide a venue for engaging other sectors, officers and stakeholders in influencing, identifying and monitoring their development priorities, and jointly developing priority policy guidelines and/or enhancements.
- ✓ Strengthening Mentoring and Coaching by Technical Experts by recommending the institutionalization of coaching and mentoring. Coaches and mentors will engage with government and/or development partners continuously to address poverty/MDG targets in the country.