REFORMS AND IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES IN GOVERNMENT OF BANGLADESH: FIELD OBSERVATION AND ANALYSIS (2010-2018)

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ABSTRACT

When it comes to improving citizen service delivery standard and processes, or broadly, management in government (MIG), many reform programs and improvement efforts are ongoing across different ministries, departments, and agencies. As part of a larger field research, this paper investigates what those programs and projects are, and how they are doing, and what the gaps are. Analyzing the publicly available data on the government portal and donors' website, this article provides an overall idea of current reforms in various places of government. In parallel, field research was conducted through visiting agency offices, observing office environment and mechanisms, and interviewing public managers who are working at district and sub-district level offices of directorates or agencies. As a trend, state-led development process and the traditional mode of administration have moved to New Public Management based quality and performance approach. All donors have their own strategy framework document like 'Country Assistance strategy', 'Country Operations and Business Plan', Logical Framework Document, etc. Many of the projects are sectoral and agency or ministry specific, having inherent limitations, due to 'cadre' based organizational structural arrangement. It is common 'not to own the projects', rather 'using the fund as much as possible anyway within the given project duration'. When the fund ends, implementing units or agencies leave the projects alone. That is why many projects are actually half done without significant and sustained direction.

INTRODUCTION

This paper originated from a larger research which was done as part of the research degree of the author. The larger research project (Khaled, 2018; 2013) was about 'management in government' as seen from citizens' perspective or a bottom up experience point of view. *As a natural step of this empirical research, we were interested to know what were the ongoing programs and projects, and how they were doing, and what the gaps were from a 'citizen experience at the bottom' perspective.*

Reforms has been quite constant for last thirty or forty years or so throughout developed countries. As a blanket, called neo-liberal reforms, these were politically pioneered by Great Britain under Thatcher and United States under Reagan. Others followed. Systemic reforms as governmental strategy, in Anglo-Saxon block and beyond, has been pioneered by UK, Australia, and New Zealand, among others. When it comes to improving citizen service delivery standard and processes, or broadly, management in government (MIG), many improvement efforts – reforms programs and projects – are going on across different ministries, divisions, departments, directorates, and other agency or unit offices. Right in time.

According to Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) public presentation (BIDA, 2018), Bangladesh is one of the Frontier five economies (*JP Morgan*); the 12th economic power of the world in 2050 (*UBS*); Low cost and high return manufacturing destination in Asia (*JETRO);* one of the Next Eleven (N-11) with high potential (*Goldman Sachs*); 28th & 23rd largest economy of World by 2030 & by2041 (*PwC);* Bangladesh the Next China (*McKinsey & Company*). All these potentials and predictions depend on right kind of reforms.

While appreciating the right reforms, we need to continuously check and balance, what all these mean at the citizen experience level. As we know, there are so many reforms that failed by design or by implementation, or produced too little result. This is confirmed by Building State Capability project (*BSC, Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University*). As it is said, too many development initiatives have limited impact - schools are built but children do not learn, clinics are built but sickness persists (Andrews, Pritchett, Samji, & Woolcock, 2015). So, there is a need for examination and re-examination of the ongoing reforms. This article attempted to contribute in that dimension.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The trust in government as an organization in terms to capacity to serve the citizens and fulfill their ever-increasing expectations is in decline (Behn, 1995, 1998; Fukuyama, 1995; Ruscio 1996). It is not a developing country only phenomenon, rather a global trend. Over recent decades and in many nations, the level of citizen trust and support for government has been declining (Ferlie, Lynn, & Pollitt, 2005). In the United States, the proportion of Americans who replied that they "trust the government in Washington to do the right thing" some or most of the time has fallen steadily from 70 percent in1966, to 25 percent in 1992 (Putnam, 1995), and to only 15 percent in 1995 (Nye, Zelikow, & King 1997). Public confidence in government has also declined in Canada (Zussman, 1997), some European countries (OECD 2011; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011), New Zealand (Barnes and Gill 2000) and other nations.

As summarized in The Trust Issue of Oxford Government Review in 2016, the developed countries' populations are fed up with globalization for the benefit of the few, letting trade drive away jobs, and encouraging immigration so as to provide cheaper labor and to fill skills-gaps without having to invest in training. As a result the 'anti-government', 'anti-expert', 'anti-immigration' movements are rapidly gathering support (Woods, 2016). So bridging the gap became a challenge in itself between citizens and their governments (Woods, 2017).

Over the same period, a wave of ongoing governmental reform has washed over much of the developed world (Kettl, 2002; Kickert, 1997; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). Many developing countries have been moving toward 'newer public management' regimes to make their governmental operations more efficient and effective in response to the demands of *overhauling of public management system*. There is a constant call for reforms in government reforms which have been characterized by *minarchism* (limited government), *debureaucratization* (less bureaucracy), *decentralization* (reduced central control) and *marketization* (public sector corporatization, outsourcing and privatization). These signify a marked departure from the state-led development process and the traditional mode of administration to market based neoconservative ideology (Zafarullah & Sarker, 2016).

Another very important dimension, Quality initiatives, have entered into MIG arena in the name of most commonly used term, Total Quality Management (TQM) or total quality management. TQM or Continuous improvement (CI) of quality overlapped with other themes like 'more choice for service users', 'explicit standards and performance management', 'focus on outputs and efficiency', 'concern for safety', 'greater use of competition and contracting', and 'increase accountability for performance' (Hughes, 2012). Originally a private sector idea in engineering and manufacturing, found an audience in managerial philosophies (Deming, 1986; Juran & Gryna 1993) and also came to be adopted in service sector (Norman 1984; Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1990). With interesting development in public sector reforms (PSR), *quality improvement* had become a major idea in public services or management in government (MIG) after 1980s (Pollitt 1990; Ferlie, Pettigrew, Ashburner & Fitzgerald, 1996), despite methodological problems in evaluating quality initiatives (Walshe & Freeman 2002; Ovretveit & Gustafson, 2002).

All these had been reflected in our reform commissions' reports and recommendations up to now (2018), as reviewed in literature review portion of the larger research project (Khaled, 2013; 2018). In short we can say, Bangladesh Government is no exception in following global Anglo-Saxon pattern of reforms in MIG, following and borrowing many terms, tools, and techniques from private sector management.

As recent signposts of reforms, the Civil Service Act was drafted in 2010. With the help of UNDP project CSCMP (civil service change management program), Citizen Charter was introduced in all the ministries and departments of the government. Then there have been all these A2I (access to information) office and digital initiatives, GIU office (Governance Innovation Unit), APA (Annual Performance Agreement), IPS-TQM (Improving Public Service- Total Quality Management), LGSP (local government support project) and similar initiatives. But, in the end, what we see in citizen experience and public media, the improvements in many case, are *more in forms rather than in functions or contents*. Overall, there is little qualitative change in how government works and how citizens perceive about the quality of the service delivery of the governments (Khan, 2009; Khan, 2015; Ali, 2004; 2007).

Now we will turn to our observations and analysis of the recent reform initiatives and management improvement projects, and identify what is missing, or what could be better.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In line with the above mentioned introduction, the objective of this paper fulfills two core investigative objectives among the broader objectives of the larger research or overall thesis. *One objective* is to provide a scenario overview of the current reforms, particularly service delivery improvement initiatives, in various places of government as part of the overall public service goal of reaching citizens door step. *Another objective* is to investigate the qualitative impact of these reforms including digital movement, innovations, or improvement ideas to citizen service level at district (zila), sub-district (upazila), and union level.

Clearly, the methodological approach can broadly be categorized as 'grounded theory approach' and 'qualitative strategy' using 'phenomenon' based 'case study design' (Yin, 2017; Saunders & Thornhill, 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2011;

Creswell, 2007; Czarniawska, 2004).

First objective has been fulfilled through desk research and website review. Thanks to internet and Bangladesh Government policy of using internet and ICT to provide information. Bangladesh Government web portal contains a lot of information about government's activities including Acts, Policies, Rules, etc.

Second objective has been fulfilled through *visiting the office*, *observing office environment and mechanisms*, and *interviewing public managers* who are working at district and sub-district level offices of directorates or agencies. Specific respondent in case of specific reforms are not mentioned, naturally, to maintain their individual identification. The observations are presented as a whole, in general.

In a field research like this one, findings are observations from the field – *office setting*, *people*, and their complex and networked *interaction process*.

- Here *office setting* included agency offices located at Upazila complexes, Zila Offices of agencies, etc.
- *People* means officer in charge or unit heads of those offices (managers), accounts officers, computer operators, support staffs and office assistants.
- The *interactions* include how the unit head communicate with their superior offices at Zila level, Divisional level, and national head office (DG office / Chairman office); how they interact with their internal and subordinate colleagues, how they interact with clients (citizens seeking the service), how they interact with other stakeholders like this researcher or media (open ended interview).

In such an in-depth, 'thick' qualitative, narrative, and filed research, the foremost challenge is said to be gaining access and negotiation with the field actors or respondents. But we overcame it with quite ease. We showed the unit heads the declaration letter (purpose and intent of research) and then the discussion followed a natural way. Within short time, we found the respondents very participative and cooperative.

Also, a lot of documents have been reviewed, in parallel, to complement and supplement the field observations and analysis. These documentary reviews and field observations have been done as part of a larger project of MPhil and PhD research, during 2010 to 2018. Some of the factual figures (i.e., how many projects running, or completed, etc.) may change since then, but we would argue that the overall qualitative analysis still holds almost the same.

Another important point to repeat here is that in such empirical, naturalistic, in-depth qualitative and field research, analysis is intertwined with observation (Yin, 2017; Saunders & Thornhill, 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2011; Creswell, 2007; Czarniawska, 2004).

So each reform and MIG improvement initiatives are reviewed with observations and analysis together.

DISCUSSIONS
Findings of Phase I: Observations and Analysis of Management Reforms within the Government
Government has taken many 'continuous improvement' (CI) programs and projects across the ministries and directorates. In this section, we present our appreciation, observation, and analysis of those CI efforts. In the next section, a donor wise observations and analysis is presented.

Where is the Hub Point of MIG Initiatives: MOPA or PMO

Ministry of Public Administration (MOPA), earlier called Ministry of Establishment, could be a starting point (mopa.gov.bd/en). It would be better if there were a comprehensive list of reforms ongoing projects that would help us to systematically review Donor wise project list, Ministry wise project list, Agency wise list, Thematic area wise list, etc. But no organized listing of the ongoing improvement efforts has been found in their website.
That means, as the umbrella ministry of civil service structure, the focal point is missing at the ministries and secretariat.

Many MIG reforms programs and projects, CI (continuous improvement) process, and other improvement initiatives are ongoing here and there, in different ministries in association with different donors like UNDP, JICA, World Bank, DFID, etc. These projects, though look sectoral in scope, share the common goal of *improving management or working mechanism of government for better citizen service delivery or making government work for citizens.* So as next step of our grounded theory, naturalistic research approach, we took the PMO (prime minister office) website (pmo.gov.bd) as starting point to check what 'management improvement' projects are going on.

In PMO (prime minister's office), there are several offices which are cross-cutting in the sense are that they are not under specific ministry, rather they are citizen need centric. They are assumed to be Prime Minister's priority projects or fast-track projects. (Table 1)

All the ministries and their departments and directorates are meant for citizen service in their respective sector, in general. But when an office is inside the PMO It can be said that these offices have been created for fast track service or as means of powerful coordination with different service rendering ministries and directorates for the sake of service to the citizens. *Currently it contains following projects:*

Among all these offices, Access to information (A2I) and Governance Innovation Unit (GIU) seems to be more related to what we are researching – *improving management mechanism of government offices.* Both are concerned about general idea of improving citizen service delivery procedures of different ministries, departments, directorates, etc. in terms of *innovation, reducing red tapes, reducing steps and reducing time, cost, and visits (TCV) to government offices.* This article will investigate these and other reforms projects under different ministries, which are concerned with general

management problems – procedures and mechanisms of how government work.

Table 1. Projects / Agency units of National Priorities under PMO

Name of the Projects	Brief Description of Purpose – Agency or Units under PMO
Ashrayan Project:	Housing for all, particularly uprooted people due to flood, cyclone, river corrosion etc.
Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (BEZA):	Facilitation authority for specially allocated economic zones (SEZ) in different areas of country, to attract local and foreign investors for rapid economic development through industrialization and employment generation.
Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority (BEPZA):	EPZs are exclusive zones for export oriented industrial set ups having dedicated facilities and processes. It provides some exclusive terms and benefits to export oriented industries.
A2I (Access to Information)	Main office for converting the digital Bangladesh vision into reality. Starting from website for all ministries and directorates, they are working on how to digitize the forms, application procedures, contacts of all government offices and officers, and how to simplify different service delivery mechanism using the IT platform.
Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA):	BIDA was created merging previous Board of Investment (BOI) and Privatization Commission, to act as private sector *investment promotion and facilitation agency*. It provides one stop service in advising, registration, utility services, connecting local investors, connecting to government offices, etc.
Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) office:	PPP office is a dedicated office under the PMO to support line ministries to facilitate PPP projects for infrastructure development. A PPP Unit under the Ministry of Finance was also established to further accelerate the realization of PPP objective.
Governance Innovation Unit (GIU):	Initiated by Professor Gowher Rizvi, *International Affairs adviser to the prime minister,* GIU is meant to be hub facilitation unit to develop the culture among public servants for *Putting Citizens First. (That means a* qualitative change by reducing red tape, improving service delivery, engaging public sector employees and getting results for citizens)
NGO Affairs Bureau (NGOAB):	NGOs are all social welfare organizations funded by local and foreign donors. This regulatory body facilitates NGO (non-government organizations) activities around the countries. Deputy Commissioners (DC) once in a month hold coordination meeting with NGOs working in the districts.

Observations and Analysis: Access to Information (a2i) of PMO

Access to Information or a2i (a2i.gov.bd) had been established in 2009 as a UNDP and USAID-supported program directly in Prime Minister's Office of Bangladesh. A2I goal is mentioned to ensure easy, affordable and reliable access to quality public services for all citizens of Bangladesh. Their *strategy* is to:
- Empower civil servants with the tools, expertise, knowledge and resources they need for experimenting and innovating citizen-centric solutions to public service challenges;
- Establish both physical and online one-stop access points that scale innovative services and make them available to citizens easily, reliably and in an affordable manner;
- Encourage and support non-government actors, including small entrepreneurs, teachers and the youth, to partner with government actors.

A2I claims to drive the creation of a public service innovation ecosystem and delivery infrastructure from the Prime Minister's Office working closely with the Cabinet Division. Its unique, simple and powerful Innovation Lab+ model revolves around: cultivating 'Empathy', reducing 'TCV', simplifying through 'SPS', supporting innovation through 'Service Innovation Fund', celebrating innovators with 'Innovation Summits', establishing delivery platforms enabling 'Services for All'. Simply speaking, a2i is branded as the focal point of government's digital Bangladesh initiative. Using ICT (information and communication technology), this office strives to build websites, platform, and other mechanisms for making the information and services more accessible and available.

As natural for a research following grounded theory approach, we need to analyze what we see, as *data collection (observation) and analysis* cannot be discretely separated from one another.
- A2I is more focused on indicators, than on structural bottlenecks, even less on nuances of the mechanism of agency offices at field level.
- Much touted as it is visible, that means it looks like a typical donor funded programs, whose website is the most excellent part of their visibility.
- More connected to government at the TOP, less connected to citizens at the BOP and citizen serving field officers. It makes government happy by bringing award and accolades from different international forum and government is happy to publicize it in front of citizens. Citizens are yet to be included.
- Government seems to assume that government needs more 'marketing' or 'branding' so that citizens can appreciate ongoing initiatives of government. A2I also brought in Philip Kotler, the most famous marketing guru of the time to brand Bangladesh as a 'sleeping tiger' (Access to Information, 2010).
- In line with that A2I developed its own branding rather successfully. But citizens experience in many government offices that actually the digital process does not work physically due to structural and cultural bottlenecks in government.

As a whole, there is clear signs of improvement in forms and information availability in the offices and websites. But, when people still find physical bottlenecks in most citizen service delivery processes of most agency offices, citizens naturally have a doubt on a2i or digital Bangladesh, or at least in the completeness of the initiative. (Anyone who has experienced or know others who have experienced of getting or modifying National ID card (NID) and National Passport, can understand it firsthand).

So innovation is fine, IT or digitization is wonderful, but IT can help to make the services faster and accurate, only

when the physical process is well defined. And scaling up and mainstreaming IT enabled citizen-centric public services, need bottom up understanding of the nuances at the field, which is missing.

Observations and Analysis: Governance Innovation Unit (GIU) of PMO
Innovation in governance and public service is a new catch word now-a-days. Governance Innovation Unit (GIU) was established in PMO in 2012. GIU (giupmo.gov.bd) was initiated by Professor Gowher Rizvi, *International Affairs adviser to the prime minister,* built on his earlier experience as a director of *Ash Center of Governance and Innovation at Harvard University.*

According to GIU unit, innovation means working smarter. It also means being inclusive by using successes and lessons learned from other countries, ministries and non-government organizations to multiply results for citizens. Finally, innovation means cutting red tape and learning to manage risks, through pilots and models. Many public sector employees have ideas for creating value for the citizens they serve; the GIU serves as a catalyst to encourage their ideas and good work. GIU is tasked with re-inventing the public sector to encourage *Putting Citizens First* by improving citizen satisfaction with services. GIU is meant to be hub facilitation unit to develop the culture among public servants for *a* qualitative change by reducing red tape, improving service delivery, engaging public sector employees and getting results for citizens.

Observations and Analysis
- The GIU seems to be overlapping with A2I in terms of proposition, but looks much less organized and professional than A2I.
- It is not at all clear how this unit is different from A2I unit, within the same PMO unit, which also deals with innovation, just with IT at forefront while they also claim to champion 'innovation' and 'improving' the service delivery process.
- No organized briefing, concept note, strategy papers are available like the ones found in a2I portal.
- Vision mission section is left blank, objective section shows something. Focus is not clear.
- In Publications section, only a few booklets containing some small initiatives are available. The comprehensiveness of GIU is not evident (last checked in December 5, 2017).
- We tried to contact several times through email and other mechanism provided by GIU web portal. But no response was found or no reply was received. Also I contacted through Facebook Messenger. A messenger response told me to send my CV as I expressed my research interest in Management in Government (GIU). I mailed but nothing happened forward.
- Also, in the field research, it was found that public managers (field level agency officers) know about a2i better than GIU. In many cases, they do not know at all the existence and purpose of GIU.
- Common perception of the field level officers is innovation is digital and it is being done by a2i.
- As a whole, it can be concluded that GIU is yet to build a minimum level general awareness among the agency offices, let alone build a momentum for change. But in the long run, GIU, as its names says, should be the focal point for improvements of management in government.

Observations and Analysis: IPS/TQM at BPATC under MOPA
Improving Public Services through Total Quality Management **(IPS-TQM)** project (ipstqm.net)**,** assisted by aid agency of Japan government – Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), is being implemented by BPATC (Bangladesh Public Administration Training Center). Partner Institutes are BARD, RDA, NAEM, NAPD, and NILG. BPATC itself is an agency under Ministry of Public Administration (MOPA).

The General Objective of this Project is to improve the quality of public services, particularly in the Field Administration through the application of Total Quality Management (TQM) and Kaizen (continuous improvement). TQM and related concepts - *Kaizen, Zero Defects, Sig Sigma quality* - as production, quality, and management approaches, was pioneered by Japan, and later, followed by US private sector. Gradually, the TQM approach has been tried in public sector also in different scopes.

IPS-TQM project goal is to encourage Small Improvement Projects (SIPs) in more than 12,000 Upazila Offices and Municipalities of Bangladesh every year under a Nationwide Framework of One Year - One Improvement through *One Year - One Project (OYOP). Thus the project aims to contribute to policy making and institutionalization of TQM and Kaizen approach.*

Activities implemented under Phase-I include TQM Basics, TOT (training of trainers), Advance TOT, Refresher Courses, Seminar, and Workshops etc. An operational model has been developed through six Upazila level pilot courses in six districts under the then six divisions of the country to develop a model for nationwide field-level TQM training intervention. Those activities are otherwise accessible and known through the videos they provided in their website and YouTube channel.

Observations and Analysis of TQM projects
- Wonderful project documents are available publicly, which serve as starting points for reference, common understanding, and actions of all stakeholders (Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre (BPATC) & Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) , 2013)

- BPATC is the lead organization in IPS-TQM project. BPATC is under MOPA and it does not seem to have any day to day collaboration or coordination framework. That means it is running rather independently or separately from other similar cross cutting initiatives like A2I/PMO and GIU/PMO.
- These units at MOPA and PMO, might have some meeting and communication time to time, but no strategic management coordination framework for operational purpose. For good or bad, they are running isolated activities.
- BPATC is an autonomous unit under MOPA, but it cannot be expected to have similar mandate like A2I and GIU units which are located directly in PMO. In Bangladesh, PMO is very powerful, by default. And MOPA is an additional tier for BPATC.
- On the other hand, it might be better that BPATC projects like IPS-TQM can rather work independently without day to day interference from PMO. In any case, the continuity and self-efficacy of the project is not strong or mainstreamed.

Why TQM type techniques may not be appropriate: TQM has been very popular in private sector for last three or four decades, first in Japan, then in US and other places. TQM, Kaizen and related concepts have been tried first in manufacturing and then in service sector. Gradually consultants suggested it to be tried in public sector (government).

There are lessons for the public sector, for example, giving workers in small teams the methods and power to identify problems and implement their own solutions (Anderson, Cassidy, & Rivenburgh, 1991). However, we found in our field research what Khan (2010, 2015) mentioned that the introduction of these methods at this stage of Bangladesh administration may not be a viable option, u*nless the radical restructuring of the administrative system in Bangladesh is completed* and there is a sea change in the mindset of supervisors.

Difference of context for TQM in Bangladesh: These methods are used in participatory network organizations which are based on trust. The public-sector organizations in Bangladesh are too hierarchical, based on the distrust of subordinates, and team based work culture is totally absent. *The structure of Bangladesh bureaucracy is not at all congenial to team building and cooperation. So, TQM or 360-degree-feedback type system cannot be implemented to get expected impact.*

Observations and Analysis: Local Governance Support Project (LGSP) of LGRD
Local Governance Support Project (LGSP) has been running under Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives (LGRD). It is an ongoing project (www.lgsplgd.gov.bd) to strengthen local government bodies, particularly Union Parishad. Union Parishad is the lowest tier of local government in Bangladesh. Through resources received from these projects, Union Parishads are able to select their own development schemes. The system has been established countrywide through first phase of Local Governance Support Project (LGSP-I), jointly funded by World Bank and Bangladesh government, UNDP, UNCDF, DANIDA and European Union (EU) and the system has further been strengthen through LGSP-2, and is continued to third phase as LGSP-3, since January 2017.

Observations and Analysis
- LGSP is a wonderful project to address the challenges at the bottom, say Union Parishad, for example.
- The acceptance and recognition of the Union Parishad as a local government institution has gradually increased. Its efficiency and capacity to implement schemes at the grass-roots level has also continued to enhance.
- Union Parishad are the grass-root level administrative unit of the central government for implementing central government's activities, in terms of selecting schemes, projects, beneficiary groups and related activities.
- This institution has undergone many changes over a period of time in terms of its name as well as activities and responsibilities, but it was democracy in practice at root level in however limited scope.
- Union Parishads are expected to design and implement their own projects without any direct interference from upper levels of central government. Which seems ideal, but the capacity of Union Parishad to do so remained a big question.
- Rather than creating confidence, it might create a lack of confidence, if they do not have the capacity to design and implement.
- It is said that 'engaging the people in the process' is an objective, but we did not find any effective discussion mechanism in the Union Parishad. In fact, there is no culture of any citizen meeting or citizen debates and discussion in union Parishad.
- There is an inherent distrust on capability of local government, as seen from the top of government (TOG). For example, EBEK (one home one farm) project has been kept outside the purview of Upazila Parishad and Union Parishad to keep it free from 'corruption' and 'nepotism'. Rather than developing strong bottom up mechanism, negative things are assumed to be a historical and reality of local government politics.

According to our field research at Union, Upazila, and Zila level, our observations and analysis tells that the LGSP project *will not bring desired or expected benefit.* There are clear signs of lacking of the enabling environment support and strong coordination between and among LGD of LGRD ministry important stakeholders like Upazila Administration, Zila Administration, Divisional administration, LGD filed offices, and LGRD ministry. LGD office in under DC office, while functionally it is under LGD division of ministry of LGRD and Cooperatives. Also, it needs coordination on the part of many directorates under different ministries to work seamlessly at 'local government' level.

Observations and Analysis: Horizontal Learning Program (HLP)
The horizontal learning program (HLP) was a Union Parishad (UP) led peer-to-peer learning initiative facilitated by the Government of Bangladesh and supported by development partners in 2000s. Under this program local governments connect

with each other to identify, share, and replicate the very best practices of their peers (World Bank, 2008).
The unique features of HLP were as follows:

- Horizontal learning is a structured process to enable each local government to reach out across conventional boundaries to look for the best practices of peers and assess against their own indicators of success
- Replicate some of these best practices of peers in their 'my own way, in my own context' style.
- Transform collectively reform policies and institutions on the basis of the most replicated practices.
- The initiative is being facilitated by the Local Government Division, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (LGRD&C), Government of Bangladesh, and supported by the Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) of the World Bank. Different programs and projects in 10 Upazilas under the horizontal learning program were supported through various funding agencies, such as, Government of Bangladesh (GoB), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Department for International Development (DFID), World Bank, and Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA).

Observations and Analysis of HLP

- Horizontal learning appears to be a bottom-up process to work best in domains where knowledge is tacit rather than codified and where top-down best practices are lost in bureaucratic procedures. HLP mechanism was expected to be self-refining: good practices continue to be identified, refined and adapted leading to the continued improvement horizontally, from peer to peer. This complements conventional capacity building approaches.
- But like many other programs and projects, it seems to be losing its way amid so many donors and in course of change of power in government. The website (www.horizontallearning.net) is no longer available for any updates. Different donors have conducted review of HLP mechanism (Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), 2013; Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), 2013) in their own way, but it did not get a momentum as a specific unit like other initiatives.
- As a whole, HLP has a basic limitation in the sense that it cannot be scaled up that much due to structural bottlenecks of civil service cadre system in agencies and resultant lack of coordination among the agencies. That we addressed in our research analysis and solution.

Observations and Analysis: Managing at the Top (MATT)

MATT (Managing at the Top of DFID), the international aid agency of UK government, was a capacity development program for the senior public managers. MATT program was run in two phases, starting from 1999 and ended in 2013, with some interval in between. The program objective was to train and create a critical mass of reform minded civil servants who, as public managers at strategic and influential positions, would improve their own institutional performance, and would ensure generate and demand administrative reform from inside Bangladesh Civil Service.

It has similarity to CSCMP of UNDP, as it also aimed to create a change-oriented or reform-oriented mindset among civil service officials or public managers. But MATT, by its name, was targeted for senior civil service officials or public managers who are *managing from the top and key positions at the heart of the Government.*

Observations and Analysis of MATT

- MATT provided scoping visits abroad, workshops at home, particularly more at the TOG (top of government).
- As it was under MOPA, and included senior management, mainly, Admin cadre officials were included in training and workshops due to structural set up of existing civil service senior management structure, where admin cadre holds the top positions in most senior management positions.
- Since senior management (mostly from admin cadre) is connected to BOG agency field offices, only superficially, the thrust could not reach BOG (bottom of government) agencies.
- So, the impact was not significant for instituting changes in the HRM within the public sector. At the field level, Upazila and Zila officers of different agencies hardly could identify any such program and its consequences. At the end, when the donor project ended, it was sort of the end.

Observations and Analysis: Civil Service Change Management Program (CSCMP)

CSCMP (Civil Service Change Management Program) started in 2008 and is to be ended in 2018. As the name suggests, the aim has been to provide a toolbox or road map for civil service reform in Bangladesh. In more specific terms, it aimed to

- Transform traditional mindset into a modern effective, responsive, accountable and transparent public service mindset that work for its client or customers- citizens.
- introducing modern change management techniques to effectively implement reforms and changes;
- introduce modem Human Resource Management system emphasizing performance and capability
- facilitate the collaboration between civil service and citizens, especially at the field administration level;
- promote the review and revision of antiquated business processes, rules & procedures and organizational structures (including strengthening field administration);
- Observations and Analysis of CSCMP
- BOG officials commented that so far, it has been limited in workshops in various places in different agencies. In many places, the citizen charter has become 'just another signboard or another projects'.

- In general, agency level field offices are not aware of the background and origin of the CSCMP or initiatives like citizen charter. That means self-efficacy for change is still to get a momentum at the agency levels, and field level agency offices.
- An important reason of unawareness and lack of self-efficacy is, it has been dominated by, and administered by MOPA, and Administration cadre. Other cadres and agency officials are not included significantly, due to natural structural design (others say, bottlenecks) of existing Bangladesh Civil Service. So rather than an overall reform project, it remained as Admin cadre reforms-recreation training projects.

While said that, as recent project, the some of the consequence of CSCMP has been evident in the field, at least in forms, for example, *citizen charter signboard and posters, some help desks, some renovated offices, signboards, notice boards,* etc. Regardless of the services working or not, signposts like citizen charter are more or less, visible in government offices. Also, the CSCMP contributed in formation of Civil Service Act 2010, regardless of its operationalization. But here also, *what is missing is understanding the mechanism of citizen service delivery at the bottom, as it is seen from ground.*

Findings of Phase II: Observations and Analysis of Donors' Work Area
The programs of previous section are the most visible ones within the government structure and machinery. But in this section, we present the observations donor wise, that means, an overview of work area of different donors, and single out the *governance and management reforms* type programs, if any.

Observations on World Bank Programs
The World Bank is a vital source of financial and technical assistance to developing countries around the world. They provide a wide array of financial products and technical assistance, and help countries share and apply innovative knowledge and solutions to the challenges they face (worldbank.org/en/country/bangladesh)

- The World Bank works in every major area of development like Agriculture, Climate Change, Education, Energy, Environment & Natural Resources, Finance, Competitiveness, & Innovation, Fragility, Conflict, & Violence, Gender, Governance; Health, Nutrition, & Population; Macroeconomics, Trade, & Investment, Poverty, Public-Private Partnerships, Social Protection; Social, Urban, Rural & Resilience; Transport & Digital Development; and Water.
- A total of around 58 projects has been running, 276 projects completed, 19 projects dropped and around 16 projects are in the pipeline, so far.
- Among all these, in governance area, some of the projects related to cross cutting improvements are Local Governance Support Project, Leveraging ICT for Growth, Employment, Governance Project, Municipal Governance and Services Project, Identification System for Enhancing Access to Services (IDEA) Project,

Governance is important as cross-cutting theme in the overall development of Bangladesh. World Bank's Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) has identified governance as a pillar of priority and offers a range of support to improve the quality of governance. Efforts are underway to improve core governance systems in areas such as public procurement, financial management, fiscal reporting, and watchdog institutions.

Observations on UNDP Programs
UNDP (United Nations Development Program) Bangladesh has been a key facilitator in Bangladesh's remarkable development story since it first arrived in 1972 and since then helped Bangladesh make critical advances in the areas of governance, poverty reduction, climate change and disaster resilience (bd.undp.org/content/Bangladesh).

- Currently UNDP is working in the area of poverty reduction, democratic governance, crisis prevention & recovery and environment & energy.
- A total of around 26 projects has been running, 11 projects completed, so far.
- Among all these, in governance area, the projects are: Police Reform Program, Union Parishad and Upazila Governance, Strengthening Capacity for Aid Effectiveness in Bangladesh, Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh, Justice Sector Facility, and Areas for Research, Engagement and National Agendas, Implementation of Digital ECNEC and Knowledge for Development Management. *CSCMP (Civil Service Change Management Program) has been described in earlier section.*

Observations on ADB Programs
The Asian Development Bank is a multilateral programs focused in Asia and Pacific. The country operations business plan (COBP), 2018–2020 of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for Bangladesh focuses on the country partnership strategy's five priority investment areas to support the three complementary agendas of inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration: (i) easing infrastructure constraints, (ii) improving human capital, (iii) promoting economic corridor development, (iv) improving rural livelihoods, and (v) providing climate and disaster resilient infrastructure and services (www.adb.org/countries/bangladesh).

- Among these areas a total of around 78 projects has been running, 98 projects completed, so far. In public sector management category, there are 35 projects.
- Governance or public sector management is not a named criteria in the list of projects.

Observations on JICA Programs
The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is also a major donor agency working in Bangladesh. Currently JICA

has two priority areas: Accelerating Economic Growth and Addressing Social Vulnerability and programs in areas like Power, Urban development, Transportation, Private sector development, Education: Basic education improvement, Health, Governance, and Rural development (jica.go.jp/Bangladesh).

▪ In governance area, the projects are: National Integrity Strategy Support Project; Inclusive City Governance Project; Strengthening Pourashava Governance Project; Strengthening Public Investment Management System Project; The Project for Developing Inclusive City Government for City Corporations; Project for Improving Public Services through Total Quality Management; The Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship (JDS) and Project for Enhancing Capacity of Public Service Training in Bangladesh.

Among these, Improving Public Services through Total Quality Management (IPS-TQM) is being implemented by BPATC (Bangladesh Public Administration Training Center), which is under Ministry of Public Administration (MOPA). *This has been described in earlier section.*

Observations on DFID Programs

The Department for International Development (DFID) is a United Kingdom government department responsible for administering overseas aid to end extreme poverty, deliver the Global Goals for Sustainable Development (SDGs) and tackle a wide range of global development challenges.

▪ DFID's main program areas of work are Education, Health, Social Services, Water Supply and Sanitation, Government and Civil Society, Economic Sector (including Infrastructure, Production Sectors and Developing Planning), Environment Protection, Research, and Humanitarian Assistance.

▪ Governance area and public sector management is not a named category. We found the close match in the name of 'government and civil society' and multi-sectoral. In these categories, major projects are: Transparency and Right to Information, Strengthening Public Expenditure Management in Bangladesh, Strengthening Government Social Protection Systems for the Poor, Strengthening Economic Systems in Bangladesh, Bangladesh Education Development Programme, Access to Justice through Paralegal and Restorative Justice Services in Bangladesh

One of the project managing at the Top (MATT) can be directly linked to improving management capacity of government leadership in the civil administration, *which has been described in details in earlier section.*

Observations on USAID Programs

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is an independent agency of the United States federal government that is primarily responsible for administering civilian foreign aid and development assistance.

Currently USAID is working in the area of Agriculture and Food Security; Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance; Education; Energy; Environment and Global Climate Change; Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and Global Health.

▪ In governance area, USAID programs in Bangladesh, trained local government institutions to improve their ability to provide basic services, created citizen forums in each of these communities to increase citizen input on local government activities,

▪ Trained political party activists from across the political spectrum to increase political parties' responsiveness and improve internal coordination through party conferences and councils.

▪ USAID also works with public institutions to reduce corruption, increase transparency of government, and increase accountability and also help incorporate digital technology to improve efficiency of public services throughout the country, including electronic land titling, birth registration, and university applications.

Observations on European Union Programs

The European Union (EU) is a political and economic union of 28-member states that are located primarily in Europe. But the EU provides development funding for a broad range of projects and programs covering areas such as: (i) regional & urban development, (ii) employment & social inclusion, (iii) agriculture & rural development, (iv) maritime & fisheries policies, (v) research & innovation, and (vi) humanitarian aid.

▪ In Bangladesh, the 2014-20 indicative program (€690 million) focuses on 3 sectors: Governance, Food & Nutrition Security and Education & Skills.

▪ In governance criteria major project is named, Support to the Justice System - Activating Village Courts

CONCLUSIONS

This paper provided an overall idea of ongoing 'management' reforms for the 'improved service' to the citizens. There are clearly visible signs of progress like citizen charter, decorated help desk, neon signboard, elegant looking conference room, and posh office room for office heads. Said that however, there is a need to be critical about what is missing on the ground at the bottom where citizens interact with government on a day to day basis.

So far it is clear from our field research and desk research (document and website information of Bangladesh government) and that there are many reforms and improvement initiatives going on in government to make it work better for citizens. Some started as early as 10 to 15 years ago, some are most recent, or continue as part of a sequence of initiatives along the same line of approach. Regardless of the source of fund, some programs are initiated and owned by government and some are initiated by donors themselves. Most such reform programs are run through shared funding modality also.

In the previous sections, we reviewed current work area and recent programs in Bangladesh. One major observation is, in many cases, donors are not actually implementing organizations. They use government ministries, or agencies, NGOs,

or even other International Organizations. All donors have their own strategy framework document like 'Country Assistance strategy', 'Country Operations and Business Plan', Logical Framework Document, and focus area or priority streams etc. So programs and projects idea and design have to be aligned with theirs, more than the government's own internally generated strategy.

Many of the projects are sectoral and agency or ministry specific. Sectoral projects have an inherent limitations, due to organizational structural problems of cadre centered civil service system along the directorates, agencies and ministries, a system, which itself needs systemic restructuring.

On the part of implementer, the government ministry and agency unit officials' psychology can best be termed as lack of internal ownership. Fund comes from external parties, strategy is of external parties, results and impact format is of external parties. So, it is typical 'not to own the projects', rather 'using the fund as much as possible anyway'. And the programs are driven by KPI of donors' frameworks, not by the actual systemic need-satisfaction of clients – field agency offices and citizens. When the fund ends, implementing units, either government or NGOs, abandon the projects. That is why we find in the field research that many projects are actually half done without any particular direction.

Latest of such evidences in support of our analysis can be found where a *researcher at John's Hopkins University (*Honig, 2018)*, drawing on a database of over 14,000 development projects of nine aid agencies and eight paired case studies of development projects, a*rgued* that foreign aid programs lacks contextual nuances that cannot be seen by those in distant headquarters. So what they do is imposing 'tight controls' and focus on reaching pre-set measurable targets, which often prevent front-line workers from using skill, local knowledge, and creativity to solve problems in contextually appropriate ways.

So again, we can conclude that this is a sort of top-down or trickle down conception and design of development, reforms, and improvement, which do not reach systemically at the bottom, at field level where public managers provide services to citizens. How to make all these work for citizens at the bottom needs further deliberation on 'bottom-up' approach, local government approach, 'alternative development', or also called, 'doing development differently' approach.

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