

A Report on a National Policy Dialogue
On
REFORMING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION FOR
IMPROVED PERFORMANCE AND
ACCOUNTABILITY

Background

The premise of the dialogue was set by both empirical review and popular perception regarding the performance of the Bangladesh administration as being highly unsatisfactory even by the standards of most other developing countries. Although bureaucracy continues to be, following colonial tradition, the principal agent of governance and development in Bangladesh, over the years it has undergone substantial erosion both in terms of authority as well as in terms of effectiveness. The administration is generally perceived as too elaborate, complex, overlapping and procedure-oriented which has led to an inability to take prompt decisions and incapacity to implement effectively whatever decisions are taken. The outcome of such a state of affairs appears to be that bureaucracy has not been able to deliver the results expected from such an important agent of public service in a developing country such as Bangladesh. Lack of responsiveness and responsibility has led to *ad hocism*, a lack of concern for the service recipients and erosion of morale of the administrative cadres. Internally, the performance of the bureaucracy as a class has been seriously undermined by intra- and inter-cadre tensions, indiscipline and inadequate management.

Over the years a number of attempts have been made to reform the bureaucracy, and improve the efficiency of public administration. Quite a few studies were carried out to review administrative systems, operations, pay, personnel systems and management systems (most recently by USAID, UNDP and ODA) but excepting areas of pay and services most of the recommendations have not been acted upon. In spite of a wide support for administrative reform from both the general public as well as the donor community, attempts at reorganizing and reforming the system have not brought the desired results mainly because of lack of commitment on the part of the government.

In the above context the dialogue organised by CPD presented an opportunity to bring together top level present and past policy makers, opposition leaders, academicians and representatives from various sections of both the recipient and donor community. The dialogue helped to identify major bottlenecks to reforming public administration and addressed issues concerned with developing appropriate modalities and instruments for removing the bottlenecks as well as enhancing the implementation capacity for the reforms. The list of participants is presented in Annexure A. As a preparatory step towards the dialogue a background note prepared by Dr. A.T.R. Rahman, Deputy Director, Division of Public Administration and Development Management, United Nations, was circulated among the dialogue participants. This note is presented in Annexure B.

Major Issues for Discussion

The major issues that were focused during the deliberations were:

- (a) Issues of service delivery, quality and compatibility in terms of current developmental needs, (b) Issues related to raising the implementational capacity and human resource management in the bureaucracy and (c) Issues of transparency and accountability in administration within the context of parliamentary democracy.

Issues of Service Delivery: Quality and Compatibility to Development Needs

The participants were in agreement that the quality of the public service delivery system has experienced a secular decline for a long time. A number of participants were of the opinion that there was a serious mismatch between the demand, in the context of the current socio-political environment and an administrative structure which was basically built-up to serve the interests of colonial powers. The administration continued to remain elitist in nature, and was geared to essentially serve the elites of the society. At the grass roots people not only faced serious problems in accessing public services, but often became victims of these same policies. Several factors contributed towards this deterioration in the administrative environment which originated in the following areas:

- (a) rise in the demands on the civil service as a result of the increase in population and the rising expectations of the general public after Liberation;
- (b) political interference into administrative affairs;
- (c) deterioration in the quality of civil service cadres and lack of proper training for them;
- (d) inadequate compensation often leading to corruption and rent-seeking;
- (e) prevalence of a patron-client mind-set;
- (f) lack of vision about the role and scope of the state;
- (g) absence of adequate pressure from below on the administrative system;
- (h) lack of an appropriate system of accountability by the administration to the elected organs.

Some of the participants felt that the quality of the civil service was seriously undermined by mass recruitments following independence of Bangladesh in 1971 that seriously undermined the quality of the service. However, others pointed out that the size of the civil service in Bangladesh is not disproportionately large when one compares it with some other developing countries. The number of civil servants per 100 people is less in Bangladesh than in countries such as Argentina and Brazil. However, composition-wise the sizes of class III and IV employees are relatively large in Bangladesh.

Some participants pointed out that civil service morality was severely damaged when a relatively low ceiling was put on salaries of top government officials after liberation when high rates of inflation prevailed in the economy. This view was questioned in relation to whether in later periods, with the rise in compensation, the integrity of civil servants registered any improvement. The need for ensuring adequate and competitive compensation in order to attract bright young men and women to the government services was emphasised by all participants.

Many participants pointed to damage inflicted on the morale of the cadres in the absence of a system of quality-based promotion which hampered the careers of promising cadres. The infusion of army officers in the various cadre services and the attitude of the top leadership during the autocratic regime of General Ershad was cited by many as having a tremendous demoralising impact on the cadres and their capacity to operate effectively.

One participant thought that the recruitment system and gender representation left an inherent anti-women bias in the administrative system. The inadequacy of female cadres thus often led to a qualitative deterioration in service delivery.

Several participants were of the opinion that one major reason why bureaucracy could not be effective in Bangladesh was because of the lack of 'a coherent policy of transparency and accountability guiding the administrative system. One participant felt that inspite of the large number of evaluation reports and studies that had been carried out by different organisations to improve the administrative system in Bangladesh the essential elements of bureaucratic behaviour were largely left undisturbed. Contacts and/or bribes remained the principal mode of dealing with the bureaucracy.

The Bangladesh bureaucracy was tuned to serve colonial masters. It has since become accustomed to serving military bureaucrats. Such a bureaucracy tends to be less prepared to serve in a democratic environment. This bureaucracy was thus not prepared to serve the poor either. Owing to this a large majority of the people of Bangladesh remained outside the purview of, and lacked any ready access to the bureaucracy or for that matter government service.

It was felt that lack of accountability of public servants to the public remained a major obstacle to improving the efficacy of public administration in Bangladesh. At the local level the elected representatives had virtually" no power of their own and elected bodies tended to work as appendages to the local administration. Lack of. accountability down to the local level should be given due importance in any discussion of the causes of inefficiency of the civil service. No serious effort has ever been made to change both the mind set and the rules of governance through appropriate policy changes, training, motivation and incentives, in order to achieve a better and pro-poor functioning of the public administration.

Taking part in the discussion one representative of the donor community mentioned that among the donors, there is a sense of frustration concerning the civil service -they feel that bureaucracy is an obstacle to development rather than an instrument of development. This weak and ineffectual administration is identified as the paramount problem in prioritising the country assistance strategy of any donor agency. Donors find that the public has very low expectations of bureaucracy and are very tolerant. The public debate is centred predominantly on acquiring power and there is not enough public pressure to deliver services. He stressed that administrative reforms have to be driven from the top by the political leadership and reforms could not be generated from below. The political leadership has to put administrative reform high on its agenda, as for example was the case in the U.K. under Margaret Thatcher. Reform has to be sold politically and there is a need to market the need for reform within the civil service as well as to the political leadership. A strategy to market the reforms thus demands urgent attention.

Human Resource Management and Raising the Implementation Capacity of Public Administration:

Improving the Quality of the Administration

The participants felt that a number of concrete measures should be undertaken in order to raise the efficiency and implementational capacity of public administration so as to help

government officials to overcome, resistance to change'. One line of argument gave relatively more emphasis on contraction of the scale of government whilst others felt that effective devolution of power should be given priority.

A number of participants thought that the major reason behind the inefficient public administration system is that government is all pervasive and there is an inbuilt tendency to take responsibility for functions for which it is ill-equipped or which should remain essentially outside the purview of government. Government's role needs to be limited and bureaucracy downsized. Government policies should be designed in such a manner that the public has different options about the services offered. When government monopoly of a service is broken, the government service delivery system will be compelled to improve the level of service within a more competitive environment.

The participants made a number of concrete propositions to improve the quality of service, efficiency of the delivery mechanism and their effectiveness, which included:

- (a) simplification and elimination of unnecessary procedures and processes in public administration;
- (b) appointment and promotion on the basis of merit (however, some participants were of the opinion that about 20-30 p.c. of the seats should be reserved for women);
- (c) setting in place a punishment and incentives based administrative system (PDB was mentioned in this regard where an attempt has been made to link incentives to system-wide performance);
- (d) sufficient guarantees for the civil servants against pressure by individual politicians;
- (e) clear and transparent government policies regarding the civil service which would ensure career-building and help keep up the morale of the government servants.

A point which was underscored by several participants was that in the past some of the government decisions have seriously undermined both the credibility and the morale of the civil service. Reference was made to the mass promotion given to civil servants recently in which about 600 officials were given promotion in one swoop but could not subsequently be provided with appropriate placements within the administration. This episode was cited as an example of unplanned GOB policy decisions taken under pressure. It was suggested that the rules of promotion should be made transparent and merit based, with sufficient incentives for inducing brilliant and promising young people to opt for the civil service. One participant suggested delinking of appointments and promotion (as in The UN system) for the sake of greater transparency in the process and for ensuring merit based recruitment. Educational qualifications, experience and previous performance records should be emphasised during the selection process. There should be a periodic review to see if cadre placement is appropriate whilst cadre placement should reflect the training background of the personnel. Many participants agreed that human resources in the civil service are only sub-optimally utilised. The best talents are kept outside the decision making process and the system has an in-built bias against development of professionalism. The civil service must take a different view of human resource management within the service if medium and long term improvements are to be achieved.

Three important elements of human resource management within the civil service were identified as:

- (a) hiring of the right people for the right job;
- (b) postings/transfers/promotion based on a performance-oriented system;

(c) firing/retrenchment of those who were redundant or not performing well;

There should be adequate and transparent guidelines for each of the above components.

Recruitment

The issue of proper training of the civil servants and the need for their conscientisation was stressed by many participants as a means of upgrading the level and quality of human resources within the civil service. One participant observed that the training process has remained repetitive instead of becoming creative. The training modules should be designed to build up the capacity of the cadres to address real issues. An affirmative action programme is needed to train people into a different mind-set. Gender-sensitiveness needs also be imparted during the training process and gender-sensitivity targets should be set. These targets need to be reviewed each year. One participant pointed out that Bangladesh lags behind countries such as India (not to speak of Sri Lanka) in this respect.

Job Placement

Many participants felt the need for a better evaluation system to be of critical importance. Some of the participants pointed out that in most of the cases ACRs were often not appropriately written making these, for all practical purposes, ineffective. They were of the opinion that officers should be trained to write ACRs appropriately and these should be given proper weightage during the evaluation of the cadres.

Some participants suggested that concrete policies should be adopted in order to avoid inter-service jealousy and rivalry which today is seriously undermining the effectiveness of the civil service. There is still no rules for posting and transfer, which leaves wide room for discretion in making such key decisions. Where service rules exist, credibility of such rules has been seriously undermined by changes, under pressure, in the rules. A point in case was the waiver, under pressure, of the system in existence of written examinations, introduced earlier, in case of promotion to the Senior Scale. There is a quota system but no concrete information or policy is at hand to guide the recruitment of cadres under this quota system. The system also lacks interministerial co-ordination. There is no effective co-ordination even between such related sectors as WASA, PDB and T & T. There are no senior economists in the Planning Commission and most of the Division Chiefs are engineers. Training policies are arbitrarily designed and are not coordinated with national developmental policies. Coordinating these policies is essential in order to improve the quality of the cadres.

The notion of a civil service manned by generalists should also be changed and more professionals need to be inducted into the civil service. In this connection one participant also emphasised the importance of introducing performance-driven auditing for ensuring both professionalism and accountability.

Service Delivery

A number of participants underscored the role of media and pressure groups which they considered to be important and relevant to keep the administration accountable. The civil

service can also be made to be more service and people-oriented by such pressure groups as concerned citizens, functional groups, women's groups and NGOs.

Some of the participants felt that one way of improving the quality of the public delivery system is to identify areas where private and NGO participation could be more effective and to then delegate those functions to these competing agencies. Public administration can be made more effective if there is a close public-private working relationship in the fields. One participant cited the example of ASEAN governments which were enjoying a growth rate of 8-10 p.c. per annum over the last two decades (although the need for administrative reforms still remained on their agenda) because the private sector in these countries have been allowed to function relatively unhindered. This in turn has reduced the burden of public administration, thereby raising its efficiency. They emphasised the need for a division of labour between the alternate delivery systems according to their comparative advantage.

Another participant added that the vendor/customer principle can be extended to the Government as well and a customer service bureau could be created for every sector of the government to handle public complaints. It was pointed out, for example, that the income tax office has no effective interaction with the government and most government agencies have no customer or support service of any kind.

Affirmative Action

Some of the participants felt that the current system of reservation of posts (Freedom Fighter quota, disadvantaged district quota, female quota etc.) should be changed; however others felt that a balance should be struck between principles of merit and equity. One participant pointed out that steps like the recent amalgamation of the secretarial and administrative service should not be avoided inspite of the difficulty in its implementation. In this connection one participant remarked that often the government is more sensitive to donor pressure than to domestic requirements so that change in the mind-set of the policy makers towards greater sensitivity to democratic concerns rather than just pleasing the donors was another precondition for improving the quality of the service delivery system.

Politics and Administration

One participant pointed out that as in the U.S.A, the top echelons of the bureaucracy should be politically appointed, with changes being made following a change in government, in order to guarantee policy implementation which was consistent with the political agenda of the new government. However, this view was contested by other participants who observed that the issue of a politicised civil servant in a non-political bureaucracy is a complex one. The line should be drawn not at the political choice of senior civil servants or advisors, rather a distinction should be made between partisanship in the exercise of public administration and political compatibility. Where we go wrong is when political leaders insist not on compliance of the civil servants with their policies but on using the bureaucracy for distribution of patronage. Appropriate laws should be made to provide protection to civil servants from such political bullying and pressures. In this context security of tenure of civil servants was of critical importance.

It was felt that with respect to macro and micro reform measures the government of the day must be committed to neutrality. Once macro neutrality measures are in place micro-measures can be dealt with through:

(a) Rules of business, (b) regulations, (c) training and (d) motivation.

Issues of Devolution of Responsibility, Accountability and Transparency:

Devolution

A number of participants were of the opinion that the level of efficiency of the public administration system can only be raised through effective devolution of power down to the lowest level. Devolution, as opposed to decentralisation, would transmit responsibility and accountability down to the lowest level of the administrative hierarchy. In order to change both the mind set of the administration and the rules of governance there should be a clear political commitment to change. The local elected bodies should be vested with adequate responsibility and authority. Real devolution, not delegation of power should be carried out and LGs should be given governance functions along with developmental functions. In order to improve accountability the judicial system and practice must also be reformed.

A number of discussants drew attention to the fact that at present the union parishads are the only elected organs but they don't have any specific mandate. Local self-government has no independent strength to deliver goods to the people, nor do they have sufficient legal power to supervise or even monitor the local hierarchy of public administration. The primary importance is to have a policy framework that is made known to and understood by everybody in order for it to be implemented effectively.

Accountability

The participants dealt in detail with the issues of raising the level of efficiency through a more transparent and accountable public administrative system within the scope and possibilities offered by parliamentary democracy. A number of participants raised the issue of the functioning of Parliamentary Sub-Committees in Bangladesh and delved in detail into the modalities of making these Committees more functional and efficient. It was felt that at present the Parliamentary Committees have become dysfunctional because of a number of reasons. The existing laws do not ensure appropriate rights to these Committees and whatever powers are vested tend not to be exercised. The concerned minister chairs the Sub-Committee which is contrary to the accepted principle in other countries (where a senior member from the opposition party chairs the meetings). This creates a situation where the affairs of the ministry become personalised and a defensive mechanism is created within the Committees to support the decisions of the concerned department/ministry. This does not create a conducive environment for proper scrutiny, evaluation and decision-making of the work of the ministry in the Parliamentary Committees. Often the preparatory work to support the Committee is not properly done. Most of the ministers do not give adequate importance to the working of these Committees.

Several participants underscored the practical importance of the system of public hearings to aid the Parliamentary Committees, in use in many countries, which acts as a very powerful instrument for overseeing the bureaucratic decision making and implementation process through challenging the bureaucrats' monopoly over information and analysis. In this connection one participant observed that a presidential form of government bred strong

Committees whereas a parliamentary form of government breeds weak Committees. However, other participants differed with this opinion, pointing out that Parliamentary Sub-Committees also had the adequate authority to investigate and call witnesses. It is a matter of lack of practice and not the weakness of the system itself in Bangladesh that these Committees were not actually fulfilling their constitutional roles.

One participant felt that in order to be effective the number of Committees should be brought down, for example, from 40 to 10-15 with an opposition M.P. being elected as the chairman of the Committee while the concerned minister could stay on as one of the Committee members. This would make the minister answerable to the Committee and not in command of it.

One participant felt that the system of Ombudsman should be introduced in Bangladesh for ensuring a higher level of accountability. Another participant pointed out that in our system the Petition Committee serves as a proxy for the Ombudsman. It has sufficient juridical power but this Committee is virtually ineffective because of pressures from the concerned ministry against any questioning of its activities.

Ownership of the Reforms

The sense of the discussion was that successful implementation of reforms aimed at improving the efficiency of governance and ensuring a transparency and accountability based civil service was critically dependent on whether the reforms are owned by the stakeholders. This depended on whether there is sufficient political will to implement the reforms and whether commensurate, appropriate and adequate legislative as well as judicial reforms are carried out to build a conducive environment for the appropriate functioning of the civil service.

Annexure A **LIST OF PARTICIPANTS** **Session I**

1. Col. (Rtd.) Shawkat Ali Member of Parliament, Awami League
2. Mr. Rashed Khan Menon Member of Parliament, and General Secretary, Workers' Party
3. Mr. S.A.M.S. Kibria Member, Awami League Advisory Council
4. Prof. Nurul Islam Senior Advisor, IFPRI, Washington and former Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission
5. Mr. A.M.A. Muhith Convenor, Gono Forum and former Finance Minister
6. Mr. M. Syeduzzaman Former Finance Minister, Govt. of Bangladesh
7. Mr. Mujibul Huq Chairman, Bangladesh Tobacco Co. Ltd and former Cabinet Secretary
8. Dr. Maqsood Ali Former Member, Planning Commission and former Rector, PATC
9. Mr. M. Muniruzzaman Former Secretary, ERD
10. Mr. Nurunnabi Chowdhury Former Secretary and Chairman 'Administrative Reforms Committee'
11. Prof. Mohabbat Khan Dept. of Public Administration, Dhaka University
12. Dr. A.T.R. Rahman Deputy Director, Division of Public Administration and Development Management, United Nation, New York
13. Ms. Khushi Kabir Executive Director, Nijera Kori
14. Ms. Eimi Watanabe Resident Representative, UNDP
15. Mr. S.H. Kabir Chairman, Renata Ltd. and former President, MCCI

16. Mr. Nefaur Rahman Former Chairman, BSEC, BCIC and BJMC
17. Mr. Peter J. Fowler CMG UK High Commissioner
18. Mr. Owaise Saadat World Bank
19. Prof. Sardar Fazlul Karim Fellow, Centre for Policy Dialogue and Dhaka University
20. Prof. Rehman Sobhan Executive Chairman, Centre for Policy Dialogue
21. Dr. Mustafizur Rahman Dhaka University

Session II

1. Mr. Suranjeet Sengupta Member of Parliament, Awami League
2. Mr. Shamsuddoha Member of Parliament, Gono Forum
3. Prof. Nurul Islam Senior Advisor, IFPRI, Washington and former Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission
4. Mr. AT.M. Shamsul Haque Advisor, Awami League and former Secretary, Govt. of Bangladesh
5. Dr. AM.M. Show kat Ali Secretary, Ministry of Post & Telecommunications
6. Prof. Muzaffer Ahmad IBA, Dhaka University
7. Mr. Shahed Latif Programme Management Division, ESCAP and former Joint Secretary, Govt. of Bangladesh
8. Dr. AK.M. Masihur Rahman Secretary, Railways Division
9. Mr. Habibur Rahman Secretary, Establishment Division
10. Prof. Jamilur Reza Chowdhury BUET and former President , Institute of Engineers
11. Mr. P. Landell-Mills Resident Representative, World Bank
12. Dr. A T.R. Rahman Deputy Director, Division of Public Administration and Development Management, United Nations, New York
13. Dr. P. Rana Senior Economist, Asian Development Bank
14. Mr. K.Z. Islam President, Federation of Bangladesh Engineering Contractors
15. Prof. Mohabbat Khan Dhaka University
16. Mr. Eameinn Taylor British High Commission
17. Prof. Sardar Fazlul Karim Fellow, Centre for Policy Dialogue and Dhaka University
18. Prof. Rehman Sobhan Executive Chairman, Centre for Policy Dialogue
19. Dr. Mustafizur Rahman Dhaka University

Annexure B

NOTES FOR DIALOGUE PARTICIPANTS

Background

Following colonial tradition the bureaucracy continues to be the dominant apparatus for the Government of Bangladesh to govern society and to promote development. At independence, as was customary at the time, the Bangladesh administration assumed responsibility not only for law and order and the physical infrastructure but also most social services, as well as the production of many economic goods and services. Government responsibilities were so wide that they touched almost all aspects of society.

The performance of the Bangladesh administration has been less than satisfactory. According to both empirical review and popular perceptions, decisions are taken too slowly and services

are rendered without adequate concern for the recipients. Currently, Bangladesh ranks behind most Asian countries in economic growth and service delivery.

The administration is characterised as too elaborate, complex, overlapping and procedure oriented, thereby leading to an inability to take prompt decision-making, especially concerning improved performance and service delivery. There is a lack of responsiveness and responsibility. The bureaucracy is neither well-trained nor service oriented, while being focused on rent-seeking behaviour in most activities. Confusion, indecisiveness and lack of clarity in policies, which are mostly ad hoc and not oriented to strategic goals, are accompanied by severe weakness in implementing policies, thereby leading to poor social and economic results. Internally, the bureaucracy is paralyzed by intra- and inter-cadre tensions, indiscipline, and inadequate management.

Several commissions, committees and studies have been carried out to review administrative systems, operations, pay and personnel systems, and management systems, but a lack of implementation has characterized most recommendations except those in the areas of pay and services. Recently major studies in 1989, 1992 and 1993, supported by USAID, UNDP and ODA, have identified critical areas of weakness in administrative performance and accountability systems, and recommended upstream measures for rationalizing ministries with clearer mission and goals, linking ministries to Parliament through the Office of the Prime Minister for broad guidance and oversight functions, professionalizing bureaucracy with appropriate job classification measures, reforming field administration with appropriate decentralization, local government structure and participation of NGOs and other voluntary organizations. The comprehensive UNDP study was published and fully covered by press, media and other public fora.

Popular response and support for administrative reform and improvement was enthusiastic and overwhelming. Equally supportive of the recommendations were donors and international public and private institutions who play a major role in development finance and consequently in development policy-making and its implementation. The issue of administrative reform figured prominently in Paris Consultative Meetings for several years. However, by all accounts, the response of the Government has not matched the expectations of the citizens and the donor community. There is currently little indication of decisions being taken towards reforming and rationalizing the administrative system and the bureaucracy in order to achieve development and sound governance.

Administrative systems and bureaucracy work best when their role and functions are clearly defined, and appropriate modalities and instruments for implementation are devised. Related to effective administration is a constructive policy concerning the complementary roles of public, private and voluntary sectors in building the society. More particular policies and guidelines concerning these issues are necessary .

Issues for Discussion

The topic of administrative restructuring is wide, complex and amenable to rather detailed analysis. Although the following issues are not exhaustive of the topic, they constitute a reasonable choice of the most critical issues confronting the Bangladesh administration in the 1990s. Taken as a whole, the following issues address both the external and internal concerns of the Government. Human resources management is an internal issue which deals with a singularly most important resource for improved Government performance. No amount of financial or informational resources will result in improved performance if civil servants are

not motivated and enabled to take appropriate decisions concerning implementation of Government policies and motivated to contribute with enthusiasm and commitment to the social and economic development of society.

Topics of concern to both the external and internal functioning of Government are addressed by the issues of service delivery, social equity vs. economic growth, transparency and accountability, and changing scope of Government. Often criticised, service delivery is of critical importance to the improvement of the lives of the people. The issue of balancing social equity with economic growth is equally important as a basis for guiding the formulation of Government policy and decisions concerning appropriate methods of policy implementation. While social equity is an essential value in society, there is overall need for the economy to grow and to provide jobs and incomes. Thus economic growth cannot be subordinated to social equity in policy decisions and its interpretations leading to implementation. One key method of encouraging appropriate decisions is through increasing transparency and openness about the processes and results of Government activities, as well as the establishment of mechanisms for encouraging responsible and accountable behaviour. Having a major impact on both the internal characteristics of Government and the external impact of Government is the changing scope of Government.

Historically, the Bangladesh Government has involved the bureaucracy in vast operational activities. Although official Government policy is to facilitate private sector development and to dismantle some elements of the parastatal sector, little implementation of this policy has occurred. Implementing administrative reform, especially of a comprehensive nature, is a complex and daunting task. Issues of focal point, mechanisms and process are critical to a successful reform. Each of these issues has important implications for the operations of Government and for the social and economic development of the people of Bangladesh.

A. Service Delivery

Service delivery in Bangladesh is problematical. There are persistent complaints about services delivered by various extension agencies and public utilities including agricultural extension services, the Post Office, the Telephone, Telegraph and the Accountant General's Office. In addition, there is concrete evidence that although there are as many as nine qualified doctors in many Thanas, more than 80% of the population travel to urban centres for hospital care. These are clear indications that service delivery needs to be improved.

All Government services should be rendered efficiently and effectively, and these services must respond to the needs of the people and be produced in a least-cost manner in order to make the services available as widely as possible. It is necessary to put in place mechanisms and attitudes of continuous monitoring of performance and needs, thereby leading to continuous improvement.

There is a close connection between service delivery and transparency and accountability. If citizens were informed of service delivery expectations, they could more realistically utilize existing services and indicate needed services through appropriate means of expression. Through feedback, Government services can be improved. The critical questions are:

- (1) Is current market environment for government service appropriate? If changes are needed, what will be its direction?
- (2) What service delivery measures are applicable in Bangladesh? How mechanism and process can be improved for better service delivery? How participation of clients and transparency can be enhanced to improve delivery

and accountability .

- (3) How can the bureaucracy survey citizens at the lowest levels in order to understand their needs, frustrations and suggestions for improved service?
- (4) How can civil servants at all levels be encouraged to adopt a philosophy of "service delivery" to the people?

B. Implementation for Improved Performance

In the area of performance, the low implementation rate of the annual development plan caused by weak implementation capacity and other weaknesses in the public service delivery system is a well-recorded phenomenon in Bangladesh. The pipeline of development assistance is very large, with implementation falling further behind all the time. Current diagnosis indicates that decision-making patterns and operational weaknesses contribute to this under-utilization of resources allocated for Bangladesh, in spite of the fact that there are great needs throughout the country. Corruption is recognized as one of several weaknesses, and the Government has already launched a drive against corruption, but much more is needed.

A positive example is the incentive system now being employed by the Power Development Board which could be utilized in other public enterprises, as well as in the regular bureaucracy. Although performance is difficult to measure, the PDB has even been able to develop measures for the headquarters staff, linking their incentives to system-wide performance. Allowing competition in the provision of services might also encourage greater efficiency and effectiveness. In the absence of market tests, improving information for transparency can lead to greater accountability for performance. There is a close relationship among the concepts of service delivery, bureaucratic performance and transparency/accountability.

A wide variety of vehicles for improved Government performance are available, but they have not been implemented. Laws and regulations are in place for streamlining some procedures, but they are inadequately followed. While there is considerable discussion of corporatizing Government functions, little has been done. The critical issues are:

- (1) Are implementation mechanisms and processes in need of further scrutiny for purpose of simplification and elimination of unnecessary processes and procedures?
- (2) How can changes in laws and regulations become actually operational in Government offices as quickly as possible, especially those dealing with regulation and promotion of commerce and investment, which are so critical to accelerating economic growth?
- (3) How can Government officials be encouraged to overcome their "resistance to change" behaviour?
- (4) Is it enough to just "keep money tight and hard to get" or should the Government develop positive ways to encourage greater efficiency?
- (5) Can decisions be delegated to lower, more operational, levels? Can it be ensured that decisions are made at operational levels that are made accountable for results?

c. Transparency and Accountability

While Bangladesh enjoys an extremely active free press, vocal interest groups, and a lively Parliament, there are many elements of transparency and accountability that need to be developed. The principle of Parliamentary control of the executive has been introduced. Strengthening of governance measures might include implementing the Ombudsman law,

strengthening the Public Accounts Committee, and encouraging the Office of Auditor General to expand from purely financial auditing to "value for money" auditing.

These and other measures of transparency and accountability can lead to greater openness and access to information concerning Government decisions and operations, through which the bureaucracy might be motivated to adhere to criteria which can stand up to scrutiny. The security classification of documents may be overly restrictive if openness and scrutiny by citizens is to be encouraged. Accountability mechanisms with a large degree of openness, which is especially appropriate for domestic social and economic matters, can encourage the bureaucracy to adhere to criteria that are objective, rational and fair. The critical questions are:

- (1) Are the goals of Bangladesh society and the bureaucracy itself clear enough to permit developing programmes whose operations can be evaluated against those goals?
- (2) Does the Government have a "guiding" vision for assessing its performance according to outcomes, rather than outputs and processes?
- (3) What transparency mechanisms are appropriate and practical in a democratic society that is attempting to accelerate economic growth?
- (4) What is the relative importance of mechanisms for "political accountability", "financial accountability" and "administrative or managerial accountability"? Do Government administrators in Bangladesh have means of knowing whether their programmes are effective and administered efficiently? Are the administrators responsive to the politicians and to the people?

D. Human Resource Management and Development

Although the Bangladesh public service has been plagued by irregular recruitment and enormous problems of human resources development, there have been several recent advances: namely, stopping extension of service beyond retirement, activating promotions, increasing merit considerations in promotions, and widening overseas training opportunities. Despite these advances, there are in many difficulties and inconsistencies. The PATC remains under-utilized. The National Training Council remains un-activated" Elaborate quota systems undermine the merit principle.

If there is seriousness about the need for national development, then human resources" must be managed in a manner that encourages their contribution to development policies. People must be managed in a way that leads to high level of organizational performance. Authentic organizational performance is not only adherence to bureaucratic procedures and production of outputs, but also attention to achieving positive outcomes in the society in terms of social and especially economic development. The critical questions are:

- (1) Are the human resources in Bangladesh being managed optimally; that is, in a manner that encourages service delivery and high-level bureaucratic performance?
- (2) Are the current rules for appointment and promotion, although recently revised, encouraging to recognition of merit and improved organizational performance?
- (3) How can Bangladesh public servants' attention become oriented toward achieving positive outcomes in society?
- (4) For the management of human resources, what is the most productive, yet fair, scheme for organization of cadres of services? Should there be one unified service based on job classification and grades or a multitude of specialized cadres with post reservations?

- (5) Can the ACR contribute to improved performance? What is "satisfactory service record" and is this an adequate standard for performance in a results-oriented bureaucracy? Can the content of the ACR be more formative in order to encourage improved performance?
- (6) Is it reasonable to train civil servants and to expect them to perform better if they are returned to the same bureaucratic structures and systems or must the administrative systems be also changed?
- (7) What can be done to make administrative training programmes more sensitive to the concerns of women and the needs of the poor?

E. Changing the Scope of Government

It is commonplace to characterize the Bangladesh administrative machinery as over-extended, overstaffed in some instances (especially public enterprises), adversarial towards and even disabling of the private sector. Although the private sector accounts for 80% of the GDP, observers note the pervasive presence of the Government in managing economic activities at the micro-level. How can the current interventionist role be transitioned to one of supporting the development of the entrepreneurial private sector.

The Government machinery is complex and difficult to manage, with the resulting negative impact of confusion in policy development leading to inefficient implementation. There needs to be an examination of what the Government must do and what it can best accomplish. Priorities must be set to concentrate Government activities in the more strategic areas where appropriate and feasible opportunities for devolution of public administrative responsibility to the private or NGO sector may be explored. Efficiencies available to the private and NGO sectors must be made available for effective national development. The critical questions for discussion in this area are:

- (1) What functions should be the responsibility of the Government administration? The parastatal sector? The local governments? The private and NGO sectors? What criteria can be developed to assist in developing policy to assign various functions to various sectors?
- (2) How can functions be carefully but effectively transitioned from the Government administration to the other sectors?
- (3) Are there any areas where the government can or should play a more active role than it is today?
- (4) What steps can be taken to promote greater interaction between the government, private and NGO sectors?

F. Implementing Comprehensive Administrative Reform

Implementing administrative reform, especially of a comprehensive nature, is a complex task. Issues of focal point, mechanisms and process are critical to successful reform. Previous reform efforts, except more limited ones on pay and services, have floundered for lack of strong sponsorship from high level focal points. Comprehensive reform must proceed step by step, within a broad framework of principles and guidelines. It is possible to view intermediate steps as consolidation measures that build on current realities and perceptions and require immediate remedial actions which will signal the changes necessary for reform. Eventually, the reform measures would be geared to developing a more responsive, transparent and accountable administrative system and a performance-oriented civil service to support parliamentary democracy as well as durable development. The critical issues are:

- (1) What key institutions can serve as focal points for public administration reform? The Prime Minister's Office? The Parliament?
- (2) What can be done to conscientise political parties on the importance of administrative reforms and what steps can be taken to involve them in the reform process?
- (3) Which mechanisms can be developed to prioritize and articulate needed reforms?
- (4) How to identify critical posts and select appropriate persons for these posts for implementing successful reform?
- (5) What supportive measures (e.g. training, incentive, awards etc.) are needed to strengthen the reform environment?
- (6) What processes can be used to manage "change" in the public administration?