Policy Brief

National Integrity
System Assessment
Bangladesh

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

TRANSPARENCY
INTERNATIONAL
BANGLADESH

Social movement against corruption

Public Administration

In Bangladesh, public service is used as a synonym of "civil service" to denote a class or classes of service to which recruitment is made on the basis of a competitive examination conducted by the Bangladesh Public Service Commission (PSC). The appointment, conditions of service, tenure of office, dismissal and reorganization of the public service have been stipulated in Articles 133, 134, 135, 136 and 152 of the Constitution respectively. Bangladesh follows a two-tier administrative system. The upper tier is the central Secretariat at the national level consisting of the ministries and divisions which formulate policies and undertake major decisions. The lower tier is composed of the 'line' departments/directorates attached to the ministries and divisions that are mainly responsible for general administration, service delivery to citizens and implementation of various government development programmes at the sub-national level.

The amount of resources allocated to the public administration sector has increased considerably during recent years. This increase in public sector spending has been a response to the higher cost of living and also a strategy to address bribery and corruption. The independence of public sector employees is not protected adequately by law. There is an alarming and increasing trend of politicization of public bureaucracy. The integrity and procedures of the recruitment system have been questioned. The promotion system is fully non-transparent and based on arbitrary decisions of the Government. The legal provisions pertaining to transparency are not consistently applied. Awareness about the law regarding Right to Information (RTI) is lacking among the majority of government officials, many of whom are reluctant to accept RTI applications from people. The existing system of public procurement contains important anti-corruption safeguards but in practice these are not always implemented effectively. As a result, corruption has been and continues to be an unfortunate but integral part of the administrative system and culture in Bangladesh. Bangladesh has recently adopted a NIS strategy but it is yet to be operational.

The public sector does not presently engage in any significant efforts towards educating the general public on corruption and also does not actively collaborate either with civil society or the private sector in addressing challenges of good governance.

Strengths

- High priority attached to public service in budgetary allocation.
- Increasing cooperation between the public sector and civil society.
- Performance based auditing piloted.
- Introduction of Mid-Term Budgetary Framework.

Weaknesses

- Lack orientation in terms of values of new public administration and dynamics of development management.

- Great number of employees but ineffective public service delivery.

- Partisan political appointments, transfers and promotions. Number of Officers on Special Duty (OSD) high.

- Elitist, powerful and resistant to change.

- Characterized by structural deficiencies, erosion of hierarchical control and lack of motivation.

- Vulnerable to politicisation for personal/material gain leading to corruption.

- Inclined towards close door policy development leading to erosion in transparency and accountability.

Recommendations

- A Civil Service Act must be enacted with provisions on transparency and independence in terms of civil service recruitment, promotion, career progression, integrity and accountability combined with a good balance of positive and negative incentives.

- A perfromance-based career planning system for the public sector employees must be developed.

- Public Officials must disclose information of wealth and assets and update annually.

- Government should consider the formation of a Governance Review and Reform Commission (GRCC) to examine and address the structural, managerial and behavioural issues affecting the performance of the public sector.

About Policy Brief Series

One of the key strategic areas of TIB's research has always been the institutions of democracy and specialized pillars of governance and accountability, which constitute the National Integrity System (NIS), a collective of institutions and practices that are crucial to maintaining integrity and accountability in government, non-government and private sector. The NIS in Bangladesh broadly consists of the following institutions: Parliament, Executive, Judiciary, Public Administration (bureaucracy), Local Government, Police (law enforcement agency), Comptroller and Auditor General (supreme audit institution), Election Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, National Human Rights Commission, Information Commission, Political Parties, Civil Society, Media, and Business.

TIB has conducted a series of research, surveys and diagnostic studies on many such institutions, by which it has not only created demand, but also catalysed a number of significant legal, institutional and policy changes. Against this background, this policy brief series attempts to diagnose and analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the NIS in Bangladesh and recommend implementable measures to strengthen these institutions.

This policy brief draws on *National Integrity System Assessment Bangladesh 2014* available at: http://ti-bangladesh.org/nicsa/2014/en/