Development Agenda and Policy Ownership:
Mapping Civil Service's Contribution to PRSP in Bangladesh[1]

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Abstract:
Lack of policy ownership was considered the main reason for failure of the development policies of the World Bank-IMF in loan receiving countries during the structural adjustment regime. In response to previous failures, the Bank-Fund introduced a new policy recipe called poverty reduction strategy paper PRSP where policy ownership was a major ingredient. Ownership was supposed to be institutionalized through participation of stakeholders in loan receiving countries, including the civil service. The civil service in Bangladesh like other countries arguably is an important constituent in development policy formulation process. While the article principally aims to explore the contribution of the civil service to Bangladesh's PRSP to examine policy ownership in development agenda taking PRSP a case in point, it also establishes the merit of exploring civil services' role in development agenda setting citing examples from Southeast Asian nations.

Key Words: PRSP, Civil Service, Policy Ownership, Bangladesh

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Introduction

The issue of policy ownership of development agenda emerged as an important aspect in international development cooperation during the 1990s. The issue came to the forefront of development agendas in the face of the failures of donor, particularly multilateral donors such as the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), led development strategies in developing countries including Bangladesh. The evident failure of structural adjustment programs (SAP), introduced as a loan condition by the WB-IMF in early 1980s contributed to the rise of interest in policy ownership. The World Development Report 2000/2001 (World Bank, 2001) argued that local conditions and the ownership of aid receiving country should be taken into account while maintaining development cooperation[3].

The issue of policy ownership was emphatically promoted in the comprehensive development framework (CDF) announced by the World Bank under the leadership of J Wolfensohn in 1999. This was following changes of the WB in the understanding of poverty discourses and the failures of the WB's development approaches. Based on new understanding, the Bretton-Woods twins i.e. the WB-IMF opted for introducing a new strategy replacing previous SAP, under the principles of CDF. The new approach called for developing a strategy paper, known as poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP), with explicit aim of poverty reduction in loan receiving countries. The CDF incorporated four principles for aid flows: 1) long term and holistic, 2) country ownership and stakeholders' participation, 3) result oriented, and 4) country led partnership.

A PRSP emphasized ownership that could be achieved through participation of major stakeholders during the formulation process ranging from common public to civil service to national parliament to civil society organizations. Any developing country of either highly indebted poor country (HIPC)[4] of the WB or a poverty reduction and growth facility (PRGF)[5] of the IMF category willing to receive concessional loans had to develop a PRSP and it was supposed to be approved by the Bank-Fund. Bangladesh as a loan recipient under PRGF category of IMF had committed to preparing a PRSP as the major development strategy for poverty reduction replacing the traditional five year plan. PRSPs became key policy instruments through which the world's major donors were related with low-income countries and countries undergoing economic crises (WB, 2002; Guttal & Mallaluan, 2003).

Since independence Bangladesh has been struggling to consolidate democratic institutions and has been exposed to military and quasi-military regimes several times. The impact has been that participatory policy making is yet to emerge in Bangladesh. While it is popularly perceived that the lack of participatory policymaking process has paved the way for civil servants to play an overriding role in development agenda setting, however contrary to this public perception donor

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[3] The issue of policy ownership was however put forward before WB-IMF by some economists of developing countries (see for example Sobhan, 1982) including Bangladesh.

[4] The HIPC initiative entails coordinated action by the international financial community, including multilateral institutions, to reduce to sustainable levels the external debt burden of heavily indebted poor countries that pursue IMF and WB-supported adjustment and reform programs, but for who traditional debt relief mechanisms are insufficient (http://www.imf.org/external/np /sec/pr/1999/pr9957.htm).

[5] On November 22, 1999, the enhanced structural adjustment facility (ESAF) was renamed the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF), and its objectives were changed to support programs to strengthen substantially and in a sustainable manner balance of payments positions, and to foster durable growth, leading to higher living standards and a reduction in poverty. The PRGF is a concessional IMF facility for assisting eligible members that are undertaking economic reform programs to strengthen their balance of payments, and improve their growth prospects. PRGF loans carry an interest rate of 0.5% and are repayable over 10 years with a 5½-year grace on principal payments. (http://www.imf.org/external /np/sec/pr/1999/pr9957.htm)

influence over policy formulation is strongly evident in Bangladesh (Muhammad, 1998 & 2007). PRSP demanded participation of all major stakeholders including political party, national parliament, civil society and civil service, but again it was globally argued that the role of the Bank-Fund was instrumental in developing PRSP in aid receiving countries (Guttal & Mulaluan, 2003). Despite multilateral donors' crucial role and scope of engagement of other stakeholders, role of civil service as a major stakeholder in development agenda setting still remains important in Bangladesh. To be more realistic, at the end of the day civil service is required to play the big role as political institutions take little interest in articulating development policy. Nevertheless, civil service seemed to have played very little role in PRSP. Standing at such a critical point, it is thus important to examine civil service's role in setting development agenda in Bangladesh taking PRSP as a case study.

Policy Ownership, Civil Service and National Development: An Analytical Framework

Conceptualizing 'Policy Ownership'

By early 1990s marginal impact of Bank-Fund development strategies was looming large to the Bretton-Woods Institutions (BWIs) i.e. the WB and the IMF, although much earlier than Bank-Fund's findings various civil society organization (CSOs), recognizing the failure, demanded reversal of BWIs approaches. In reference to the failures Wolfensohn, the president of the World Bank, suggested a comprehensive development framework where he clearly stated the notion of policy ownership that appeared in his analysis as the root cause of failure of earlier economic reforms.

> It is also clear to all of us that ownership is essential. Countries must be in the driver's seat and set the course. They must determine goals and the phasing, timing and sequencing of programs. …In some countries the long and short-term goals will be set by a process of public debate and consensus building led by the government with all sections of society…. What is new is an attempt to view our efforts within a long-term, holistic and strategic approach where all the component parts are brought together. Such development should, in our judgment, be a participatory process, as transparent and as accountable as possible within the political climate prevailing in each country... It is a holistic and strategic approach to development based on country ownership and partnership (Wolfensohn, 1999 in Rahman, 2009, p 25).

While Wolfensohn defined ownership as saying that the country must set the agenda through a fruitful public debate where stakeholders participated and the entire process of agenda setting was transparent, Shimomura and Ohno (2005) moved further stressing 'true ownership' (Box 1). The argument was a three-dimensional phenomenon and qualitatively more comprehensive than Wolfensohn's definition.

Box 1 Basics of True Ownership

- Strong will and commitment of national leaders to build a self-reliant economy.

- Based upon a concrete vision and realistic measure economic strategies and policies should indicate an exit plan from aid.

- Independent execution of development i.e. agenda setting, implementation strategy and timetable should be done without donor influence.

- Mapping development strategies in line with local condition and in doing so trial and error approach may be practiced to reach the best option.

- Using of indigenous expertise, holding consultation with stakeholders and drawing upon consensual political support within the country.

- Avoiding "blue print" approach in pursuing development strategies.

- Giving local institutions opportunities to prove and excel ability (Rahman, 2009).

Thus the first dimension of true ownership could be implied as the *goal of aid*. Ownership should be translated through strong will and commitment of national leaders to build a self-reliant economy. Development strategies and policies should assume eventual "graduation" (or an "exit plan") from aid and be supported by a concrete vision and realistic measures for growth promotion and domestic resource mobilization. Policies, being beyond mere slogan, also should be truly imbued with equitability and growth sustainability.

The second is the *scope of ownership*. It is expressed by two distinct capacities of aid receiving countries: 1) donor management and 2) policy autonomy and content (substance of national development strategies and policies). Donor management refers to the capacity to own the relationship with the donor community and requires leadership in policy dialogue, coordinating of diverse requests, selectively adopting donor advice, and handling friction with diplomatic grace. Policy autonomy and content are concerned with owning development policies and require the government to set national development goals and implement strategy and timetable independently. It is, in other words, carrying out the development by the country itself—a far broader vision than donor management. In this type of development cooperation:

> "…the government is capable of managing the entire development process and hence coordinates aid as part of its own coherent development effort. The government initiates and formulates a national development strategy, identifies specific needs to be financed by aid, presents its aid requests and negotiates with donors, matches aid programs and projects with its own internal resources, implements various developmental activities, and monitors and evaluates results" (Shimomura & Ohno, 2005, p4).

Another kind of donor management also exists where the donors assume joint responsibility to guide development process and they intervene in the process in the plea of capacity constraints of loan receiving governments to formulate and present policy content. In this type of management they together set goals, allocate money and monitor activities and eventually, it becomes a process of donor coordination rather than government coordination of aid resources.

The East Asian development "miracle", for example, is of the first category of donor management where indeed the aid receiving East Asian countries led their development activities— from inception to implementation. Under strong political leadership, governments tried to build their

own institutions to compensate whatever institutional incapacity they might have. For these governments the aid relationship was just one component of development management. It was a means to achieve a national goal of promoting growth and establishing wealth-sharing mechanisms on a nation-wide scale (shared growth).

Referring to the present aid relationship in most developing countries where donors enjoy substantial authority and constrain genuine autonomy of the countries, Shimomura and Ohno (2005) stress that government must be at the center of the development process to establish true ownership. Developing vision for promoting shared growth, building national systems for mobilizing financial and human resources, and nurturing local expertise in managerial and technical skills are also recommended to attain true ownership.

The third dimension of true ownership can be conceptualized as the *creativity of ideas*. It is the ability of the countries to make development strategies in line with their own situations. The countries should not implement a copy of a particular strategy(s) floated by donors. Even if exogenous models are considered, it should be 'translative adaptation'. This means the relevant elements in any exogenous model should be reinterpreted ensuring that the locus is situated in the country where the strategy is implemented. True ownership eventually means the capacity of a developing country to choose from alternative policy prescriptions—even if they are not recommended by the international aid community. Indeed it is precisely the point that differentiates true ownership from "nominal ownership" (Shimomura, 2005). When a country decides to rely on external advice or foreign models, policymakers and technocrats must conduct a thorough assessment of alternatives and carefully adapt the policy content and sequencing to the country-specific context in both design and implementation stages.

Ishikawa (2003) identifies four determinants to explore the actual *ex ante* processes of a specific socio-economic system transforming itself to another: (1) economic issues (trigger), (2) exogenous models, (3) *Koku-jo* (study of local scenarios) and (4) scenario. Economic issues deal with the motivation of leaders or main group of people of a country to change the regime— 'emergence of a change trigger'. However, the outcome of the change or the scenario of regime transition may not be foreseen. At this stage they may opt for analyzing exogenous models and their relevance to local reality. It requires a thorough evaluation and study of local scenarios (*Koku-jo*). The repeated interaction following a 'trial and error' method between exogenous models and *Koku-jo* contributes to the emergence of an effective scenario for a new regime. The implementation of this scenario may further produce a new series of economic issues, but these should be dealt with as second-generation issues.

The determinants provide clearly an autonomous scenario in development strategy setting. The motivation for change occurs first in the mind of the national leadership and it is not an outcome of any external actors. The local reality should motivate the leadership for a change and a copy of exogenous model is not required rather its relevance as a guideline may help the local situation. The important issue is that there may be some trial and error processes by which developing countries arrive at the point of identifying an effective reform scenario. The second-generation issues suggest that development scenario may not be constant and travel through different experiences.

Capturing the local need and situation, adaptation relevant to local scenario and trial and error are important aspects to ensure true policy ownership in international development cooperation rather than having the donors set the scope for policy choice and interpretation. Sobhan (2002) argues that the reform process needs to be domestically owned through the use of indigenous expertise, consultation with stakeholders and drawing upon consensual political support within the country.

In view of Bangladesh's huge policy exposure to donors, he further mentions that the past record suggests that government's commitment either remained shallow or insincere to reforms orchestrated by expatriate consultants and eventually all major reform agendas proved counterproductive. Referring to personal experience in Bangladesh in 1991 as an adviser (minister equivalent) in charge of finance and planning to the caretaker government of Justice Shahbuddin, he emphasizes the political intention to carry forward indigenous initiatives and thinking. During that regime 29 task forces on various issues of socio-economic development of Bangladesh involving 250 best available professionals were to prepare policy recommendations to assist the then newly elected government and parliament to establish domestic ownership over the policymaking process. Unfortunately, the subsequent elected political regimes preferred listening to the sermons of donors than to the independent thinking of the four volumes of task force reports.

Sobhan (2003) further stresses the study of the aid relationship between the donors and the recipients rather than the policies associated with aid. Capturing the relationship is important because it impinges on the political economy of developing countries, which determines the distributive outcomes of policy.

Helleiner (2000) defines ownership as the widest possible participation of beneficiaries in development actions that essentially the process of planning, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation has to be driven by the recipients. Yet, the recipient should be highly committed and try to seize ownership, as it cannot be given. Country ownership develops such quality of a State that people can understand that their representatives have freely chosen the strategies or programs to be implemented. The country then seems confident to risk the failure of a program and strategy and thus acts consistently with this belief and acceptance of responsibility (Johnson, 2005).

Stiglitz (1998) provides a comprehensive view of development strategy with special reference to the past few decades of global development pursuit. While a development strategy must be aimed at facilitating the transformation of society by identifying the barriers as well as potential catalysts for change, it requires to be more ambitious to set out a vision of the transformation of society rising beyond the nominal role of accumulation of capital and the deployment of resources that what the society will look like ten to twenty years.

Such a transformative development strategy calls for a transparent and participatory process to ensure ownership, policy consensus and to reach and motivate all. Ownership is important because he says,

> "…effective change cannot be imposed from outside. Indeed, the attempt to impose change from outside is as likely to engender resistance and give rise to barriers to change... At the heart of development is a change in ways of thinking, and individuals cannot be forced to change how they think. They can be forced to take certain actions. They can be even forced to utter certain words. But they cannot be forced to change their hearts or minds" (Stiglitz, 1998, p, 20).

He is highly critical of policy imposition, as policy conditionality not only undermines the interest of the recipient county to acquire capacity but also the confidence to exploit the ability for development. If policies are accepted in view of aid conditionality it is obvious that they are going to be superficial and equally be implemented half-heartedly. Eventually, such policy generates counterproductive result. He views "thus, key ingredients in a successful development strategy are ownership and participation" (Stiglitz, 1998). While successful social transformation

demands policy ownership, greater degree of ownership can be achieved only when the strategies and policies are developed and driven by the major stakeholders of the country.

Thus it is imperative in order for development to be a transformative process that influences every institution and individual of the society including political institutions the major stakeholders need to be involved in the process of analysis of local situations, identifying adaptive strategies, determining strategies and goals and equally so in implementation. While partnership, as imbued with the definition of the WB styled ownership, may provide space for policy influence to key international actors, true ownership that negates partnership on the ground of developing countries' inability to frame their own development model is more applicable to underwriting homegrown development strategies. The success of the Southeast Asian nations endorses the defiant attitude of the countries regarding external policy advocacy. True ownership gives opportunity to local institutions to prove their quality and ability, as the country does not opt for external support in managing development which usually happens in donor-supported interventions. Ability of local institutions is important because incapacity of institutions in many poor countries inhibits the development process to run independently and eventually paves the way of donors influence.

Civil Service and National Development

Professor Ha-Joon Chang (1998) illustrates the role of institutions in economic development with special reference to East Asian countries and the success stories of those nations. Chang argues that pure market economies cannot explain the success of the Southeast Asian nations' economic progress. Rather it needs to be looked through the contribution of institutions. He identifies three types of institutions: 1) institutions of coordination and administration; 2) institutions of learning and innovation; and 3) institutions of income redistribution and social cohesion.

While Chang argues that many non-state institutions such as business corporations, industrial associations, labor unions, and government–private sector consultation bodies are important institutions of coordination and acknowledges the importance of non-market, non-state institutions of coordination, he focuses on two state institutions. The importance these two state institutions have been emphasized in recent debates on the East Asian experience. They are the government bureaucracy, which is the central institution that makes up the state, and the institutions that provide state-business links. According to Chang (1998), central to the bureaucratic contribution is the provision of entrepreneurial vision, going beyond of popular belief of running productive enterprise, for the new economy that it wishes to forge out of the developmental process and to encourage investments in those activities that will help it realize that vision. An example that he uses is the Japanese government's success in attracting information technology industries through their vision of an information age as articulated in a series of 'white papers' (Chang, 1998).

In providing entrepreneurial vision he suggests for some objective conditions for bureaucracy based on experiences of successful East Asian countries. The first condition is the availability of a highly competent bureaucratic elite who are not necessarily provided advanced training on economics, management or some other technical subjects but generalists who can make sensible judgments on the basis of given information (my emphasis). The second condition is that "this elite need to have a substantial degree of political insulation, which will enable them to retain a degree of "autonomy" that is essential in long-range planning" (Chang, 1998, 73). The third condition is to establish a high-prestige career bureaucracy, where political appointments are checked through a competitive recruitment system and thus politically motivated hiring and dismissal is made difficult. However, while Chang highlights the political insulation of

bureaucracy in the light of successful East Asian nations, he shares the downside of the insulation. He warns that the overarching influence of neoliberal orthodoxies may itself become a threat. Thus, in order to have a balance between the neoliberal pressures and political insulation of bureaucracy an engagement of dialogues with the private sector is necessary.

Chang's (1998) insights well fit into Bangladesh's context. The contribution of a generalist civil service to economic development is heavily demanding on various counts. While the recent literature strongly advocates the active involvement of parliament and civil society in the economic agenda, the role of the civil service is again bypassed. But the realities are that since independence in 1971 the nation has survived only 15 years of continued democratic governance up to January 2007. The parliament is yet to be a strong political and representative organization in the face of confronting political culture between two major political parties. However, the immediate impact of the democratic rule is the rise of a vibrant civil society and free press. There are some valid arguments in place as to who constitutes civil society and by what terms and most importantly how the organizations are run[6]. Reality suggests that most of the civil society organizations are embedded with Western countries for funds. In such a situation, the contribution of a career civil bureaucracy to making of and implementing development strategies can hardly be overemphasized.

With special reference to PRSP one may put forth two fundamental questions – 1) how the civil service was involved in the process to determine a roadmap for poverty reduction in Bangladesh; and 2) how PRSP itself focuses on further development of an efficient civil service to spearhead national economic development. It is convincing that an efficient civil service is needed to overcome the policy leverage coming with multilateral and bi-lateral development cooperation.

Methodology

Case studies provide a valid methodological context in which to study implementation of processes but also to analyze the evaluations of that process (Yin, 2003). Further, case studies allow one to investigate phenomena composed of complex layers of variables (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2003). These two reasons underlie the choice of case studies as an appropriate methodology[7].

In order to understand the reality during PRSP the study focuses on the dynamics of policy formulation in two ministries namely: Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MWCA) and Ministry of Establishment. The reason behind selecting the former was that the researcher worked in MWCA and thus it was convenient to get data. The reason behind selecting the Ministry of Establishment was that it is the main agency that deals with the professional issues of the civil service. By analyzing the policies contained in PRSP one can understand how far the principal actors had taken steps to orient the civil service towards national development. From that perspective the selection of the Ministry of Establishment was appropriate.

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[6] In many occasions many well-known members of civil society questioned the existence of true civil society in Bangladesh. Even many questioned the validity of the urban elite in the name of civil society to represent the people. Thus many people believe that they are engaged in proxy representation; for without donor funds they rarely undertake any program.

[7] The article employs various tools for data collection. They include: consulting secondary sources, in-depth interview with various key informants particularly retired and active civil servants. In most cases interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed and where interviews were not recorded notes taken during the interview were used.

One component is that a PRSP is supposed to entail policies to develop an effective civil service. Thus current and former civil servants were interviewed. The civil servants interviewed had invariably more than eight years experience in public sector. They were professionally competent to draw educative comments and inferences. To gain appropriate feedback the initial results were presented to a group civil servants and civil society members.

Bangladesh and PRSP

Bangladesh accepted the PRSP requirements of the WB-IMF to obtain credit under a PRGF program of the IMF following the decision taken in the Bangladesh development forum (BDF) meeting 2000. In October 2005 Bangladesh released officially the full PRSP prepared under the leadership of the general economics division (GED) of the Planning Commission. The Bangladesh PRSP, tilted Unlocking the Potential: National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction8, claims to have outlined a comprehensive medium-term strategy in a sound macroeconomic environment for implementing pro-poor growth, effective safety-net programs and human development. The strategy asserts that it has been made broad-based and operational by emphasizing social inclusion and empowerment, promoting good governance, highlighting better service delivery practices and brining the environment and sustainable development to center stage.

Like many other developing countries PRSP in Bangladesh also received serious criticism. Many academics challenged the whole PRSP process (Ahmad, 2002; Hossain, 2004; Titumir, 2002; Rahman, 2003; Sobhan, 2002; Sobhan, 2002a, 2002b, 2003). The major criticisms attributed to the PRSP development were: 1) lack of political will to eradicate poverty; 2) imbalanced distribution of wealth; and 3) lack of ownership over the national poverty reduction strategy (Akash, 2002). On the other hand the government claims that the PRSP was prepared through proper consultations with stakeholders at different levels ranging from upazilla9 to divisional/ national levels (GoB, 2005). It was also argued that the preparation of the PRSP in Bangladesh was directly linked to the entry of the Bank-Fund program assistance under a medium-term policy framework. The timing of the finalization of interim-PRSP (I-PRSP) was significant because immediately after the formulation of I-PRSP and its joint assessment by the Bank-Fund, the government successfully applied for the IMF's program lending under the PRGF and the World Bank's Development Support Credit (DSC) under the PRSP umbrella. Both lending arrangements were linked to a medium-term policy framework involving disbursements of funds in series of installments (Mahmud, 2006).

Bangladesh government made special institutional provisions to make a full-blown PRSP. It designated the general economics division (GED) of the Planning Commission as the national poverty focal point (NPFP) in July 2003 (Ahmed, 2004). Moreover, the national steering committee (NSC), a high-powered committee to guide and monitor the activities of the PRSP preparation, was formed. The NSC was formed on 18 September 200310 with the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister as Chair and the Member, GED of the planning commission as member secretary. In the beginning it had 17 members but later was expanded to 2211.

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8 It is also considered the first PRSP as Bangladesh prepared second PRSP in 2009.
9 lower tier of administrative unit in Bangladesh
10 Vide memo number PD/Admn-2/17-34/2003/607 of the Planning Division, Ministry of Planning, Government of Bangladesh
11 The decision of expansion was taken in the second NSC meeting held on 13 November 2003. The total 22 members were: principal secretary to the PM, secretaries in the ministries/ division of finance, economic relations, environment and forest, agriculture, education, health and family welfare, local government, disaster management and relief, women and children, social welfare, power, planning, fisheries and livestock, commerce, science and ICT, water resources, land, rural development and cooperatives, member, programming division, and general economics division in the

Secretaries of various ministries and divisions served as members on the committee. In order to provide technical support to various ministries and national poverty focal point (NPFP), in the first meeting of NSC constituting of various sectoral thematic groups (TGs) were proposed and finally the NSC formed 12 thematic groups.

PRSP and the Role of Civil Service

The engagement of civil servants in a country like Bangladesh in public policy formulation process is very important as the country lacks strong political institutions to represent the public voice. Civil servants with wider exposure to national reality and development demand can significantly contribute to national development strategy. Moreover, in absence of a proactive engagement of political leadership civil servants' professional mastery demands they lead the process. The other significant point is that they are the very instruments of the state that contribute to the implementation of development strategies.

However, seemingly the presence of senior bureaucrats in the NSC and in the TGs in various line ministries may impress upon observers that the entire process was civil servants' led. Having long discussions with civil servants at various levels it appears that the presence of civil servants on the committees may not mean true engagement. Civil servants did not have the leadership in most of the cases.

In the beginning there was a proposal for constituting a high powered national poverty reduction council (NPRC) with the Prime Minister as chairman and the Finance Minister as executive chairman. It proposed to include a number of ministers, senior civil servants, private sector and civil society representatives but in the end it did not come into effect. The purpose of mentioning the NPRC is that in absence of NPRC the NSC virtually became the most significant body to spearhead the activities concerning the PRSP. A strategic document to deal with poverty (the number one problem of the country) necessarily would expect some strategic and visionary thrust from the NSC. Having analyzed the minutes of nine consecutive meetings from the first the high-powered NSC no strategic guidelines and vision in regards to the poverty reduction agenda was found. It appeared that NSC was mostly engaged in facilitating the activities to be done by the consultants. Then obviously the intrinsic deficiency of Bangladesh's PRSP is that it never received any visionary guidelines from either the political policy makers nor from the senior policy makers in the civil service.

The NSC was powerful in terms of getting things done[12] but not in terms of setting the vision. During the interview with staff members of the Planning Commission who used to attend the meetings as aides it was disclosed that civil servants/NSC were not even encouraged to play a critical role. One such staff member said "NSC was powerful but not participatory. Excepting a few secretaries, most participants did not speak out". A secretary who was a member of NSC also expressed his frustration that their presence was required just to validate the process.

The dynamics in terms of engagement in different ministries may be more illustrative to understand the depth of ownership and participation in the PRSP development process. The TGs in the ministries played critical role of developing background papers on the themes they were

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planning commission.
[12] The NSC did many things compromising the existing rules in the plea that they have to complete the PRSP within the stipulated time. The recruitment of consultants may be a good example. They did not bother about the official procedures. However, why they remained so tensed to complete the document within a timeframe that was presumably not given by the political authority is a valid question. However, the total analysis proved that all those were for PRGF loans.

assigned to. Based on the experience and insights of the civil servants in the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and Ministry of Establishment gained through the in-depth interviews a deeper understanding of the magnitude of ownership and engagement was achieved. The issues of the TGs occupied a huge importance in the meetings of NSC, which was primarily because of the involvement of consultants. By interpreting the minutes of NSC meetings it appears that the NSC wanted the consultants to prepare the PRSP. A mid level career civil servant said,

> "Desk officers were not involved in the preparation rather the consultants involved in the TG did it. Thus, the implementation of PRSP has been automatically weak. To me PRSP is just a book. I don't know what it contains. I don't have any interest even. I don't feel any sense of a new start due to PRSP for poverty reduction. The targets set in PRSP are ambitious; they are not set in the perspective of the capacity of the state. We wanted to have done all things. In other word we have set so many indicators and targets just to give the sense of getting so many things. To me most of them are junks".

Government officials invariably exposed that there were truly no major discussions at the ministry level involving various stakeholders. The experience in the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs suggests that in some social issues, such as gender, the contribution of civil society was substantial but the leadership resided with the consultants. Consultants primarily prepared the documents, set the matrices and targets and the Ministry only played the role of getting policies approved from the higher authority such as the Minister or the Secretary through the routine channel of bureaucracy. The resultant impact was that the civil servants could not own the PRSP as their own agenda that would be implemented by them. Statements made by officials from midlevel to senior level during the interviews illustrated the overall lack of involvement of political leadership and civil servants. A joint secretary commented,

> "PRSP is conditionality from the WB- the IMF. Some people are doing business with it. This is bogus and is not our plan. Leadership in policy development is important. The political government did not desire the development of institutions that are crucial for policy autonomy".

In the Ministry of Establishment (the principal ministry to deal with human resource issues of civil servants and public governance) there was no discussion at all as to how governance could be improved by ensuring qualitative changes in civil service[13]. While it was evident that the involvement of the civil servants was reasonably nominal, the perception of the officials regarding the PRSP was remarkable. Every one of those interviewed confidently believed that PRSP was an imposition of the Bank-Fund. They were not convinced that a document prescribed by multilateral donors would come to the aid of poverty reduction. A deputy secretary commented "We have not seen it. We do not know much about it. The document is very clumsy. We are not clear that it was developed for greater national development. Truly we are not informed".

The predominance of consultants in both the TGs and in the NPFP exposed a scenario of the incapacity of civil servants in leading the formulation of public policy and in ensuring ownership overt it in Bangladesh. The amount of participation and engagement was low for many reasons but the question that stands out is what could justify the ignorance of civil servants regarding PRSP? It is important to note that the civil service unfortunately has always been a victim of populist politics in both elected and authoritative regimes. The nation did not apply any

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[13] The member secretary, NSC and the lead consultant admitted the omission during interviews with the researcher.

comprehensive plan to streamline civil service to cope with changing environment (CPD, 2007). A former cabinet secretary in the interview justified the situation as saying,

> "…here in Bangladesh civil service was willfully destroyed in the assumption that an efficient and strong civil service would create trouble to the political leadership. We were exposed to martial law for many years and they also took the opportunity. Everything was done to make civil service ineffective".

The failure of civil service may be attributed to the inaction to make civil service innovative, enterprising and efficient of successive political regimes. Civil servants reported that indeed they were not ready to prepare a PRSP. More importantly while the Bank-Fund encountered serious resistance in the global scenario, in Bangladesh the civil servants tended to see PRSP in isolation. From the interviews no civil servant was found who was aware of the evolution of PRSP from the structural adjustment program (SAP). The lack of research based policy formulation has also undermined the scope of the engagement of the civil service. Rarely does any ministry maintain relevant data on development issues. And consultants on behalf of the government with support from donors usually prepare reports, documents, mission statements for presentation either in national or international forums. Culturally, bureaucracy has been dependent on donors and their consultants and eventually, civil service has lost its self-esteem and leadership role.

Conclusion

The study points out that the top leadership of the Bangladesh civil service has failed to contribute to formulating PRSP. The civil service seemed low-spirited and lacked innovativeness in guiding the national development agenda. The comments of the public servants interviewed testify that the Bangladesh civil service has not been critical in regards to the political economy of development cooperation. However one would believe that they should have been very aware of the seemingly arrogant dealings of donors including the Bank-Fund since independence.

In this highly complicated globalized world where the influences of the major powers are open and aggressive and while the country has a struggling democracy, Bangladesh must opt for a highly enterprising and proactive civil service. Civil servants in reality leased out the responsibility of articulating development agenda including the PRSP to consultants. The civil service failure in Bangladesh can be attributed to the national failure of making a streamlined civil service. Unfortunately, civil service in Bangladesh has never ever been given due attention to allow it to play important role in national development process. The country during her 40 years existence was ruled nearly two decades by military dictators and the military regimes deliberately weakened the civil service so that it could not be a threat to political ambitions. This military hangover even continued during the elected regimes.

Of late, the West backed civil society enjoys huge influence and authority over national public policy in Bangladesh but they also do not have an agenda for the reform of the civil service. The reasons could be that in poor countries, in terms of political and economic development, an enterprising and strong civil service may be a threat to the vested interest groups. Despite ample evidence from around Southeast Asia concerning civil service contribution to development, Bangladesh has unfortunately opted for remaining silent about a pro-people and result oriented civil service.

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3. PRSPs should measure poverty on a country basis, identify goals for reducing poverty, and create a policy and spending pro-gramme for reaching those goals. In terms of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 1 the PRSPs can be a key strategic and implementation vehicle. A PRSP should have: 2. Do you think the PRSP can be a vehicle in helping to deliver the national business agenda? â…ª If you decide that it is important for your organization to be included in the national PRSP, prepare and present the case to your Board of Directors. Approval from the Board will be essential for sustainable engagement. 6. Development Agenda and Policy Ownership: Mapping Civil Service's Contribution to PRSP in Bangladesh 1. Article. Md Mizanur Rahman. The civil service in Bangladesh like other countries arguably is an important constituent in development policy formulation process. While the article principally aims to explore the contribution of the civil service to Bangladesh's PRSP to examine policy ownership in development agenda taking PRSP a case in point, it also establishes the merit of exploring civil services' role in development agenda setting citing examples from Southeast Asian nations. Development agenda and donor influence in South Asia: Bangladesh's experience in the PRSP regime. London: Routledge. M M Rahman. Civil service reform is a deliberate action to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, professionalism, representativity and democratic character of a civil service, with a view to promoting better delivery of public goods and services, with increased accountability. Such actions can include data gathering and analysis, organizational restructuring, improving human resource management and training, enhancing pay and benefits while assuring sustainability under overall fiscal constraints, and Whilst the article will address the problems and reforms of civil procedure and the law relating thereto, its principle consideration focuses on issues surrounding reform problems among presentand future â€˜civil justice systemsâ€˜ in Eastern and Western Europe as a whole. This consideration will not simply concentrate on mere single â€˜tendencies,â€™ trends or shifts of civil procedural developments, but on the reform processes of justice systems. These processes have transpired to be strong, actual, and occasionally observable globally. They are in part similar and in part different, and are really Global Affairs Canadaâ€™s policy on Civil Society Partnerships for International Assistance (referred to as the Civil Society Partnerships Policy or the Policy) sets out the Departmentâ€™s approach to enhancing effective cooperation with Canadian, international and localFootnote 1 civil society organizations (CSOs) to maximize the impact and results of Canadaâ€™s international assistance and foster a strong and vibrant civil society sector. They bring valuable and unique experience, and they make important contributions to achieving more effective results, fostering new ideas, building local capacity and engaging with Canadians as global citizens. Canadaâ€™s commitment to advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, at