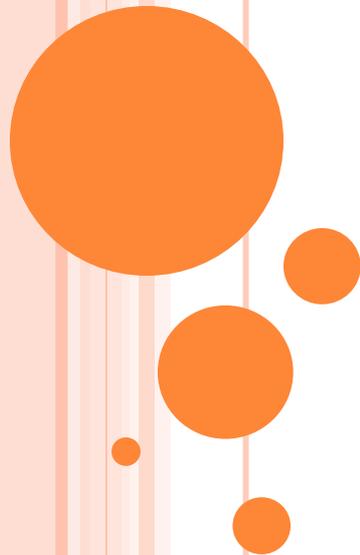# Delivering Corruption–Free Public Services to Citizens

Nasiruddin Ahmed
Anti-Corruption Commission Bangladesh

Growth Week 2016
London, June 2016

1. Motivation

- Systemic corruption sufficiently undermines the state's ability to carry out its basic functions such as supplying public goods and services (IMF, 2016).

- As there are limitations of relying solely on corruption perceptions in designing anti-corruption policies (Olken, 2006), the study is based on **corruption reality** rather than **corruption perception.**

- The present study attempts to examine the existing state of public service delivery system and explore the possibility of delivering corruption-free public services to citizens.

- The theoretical framework used is a social accountability tool namely, public hearing, conducted in 14 sub-districts of Bangladesh. It is argued that service delivery can be improved via the short route of accountability by enhancing the citizens' power over service providers through the social accountability framework (Figure 1).

2. Social Accountability Framework

Figure 1: WDR Social Accountability Framework

Policymakers

Long route of accountability

Voice

Compact

Short route of accountabilty

Citizens

Citizens' Power

Service Providers

3
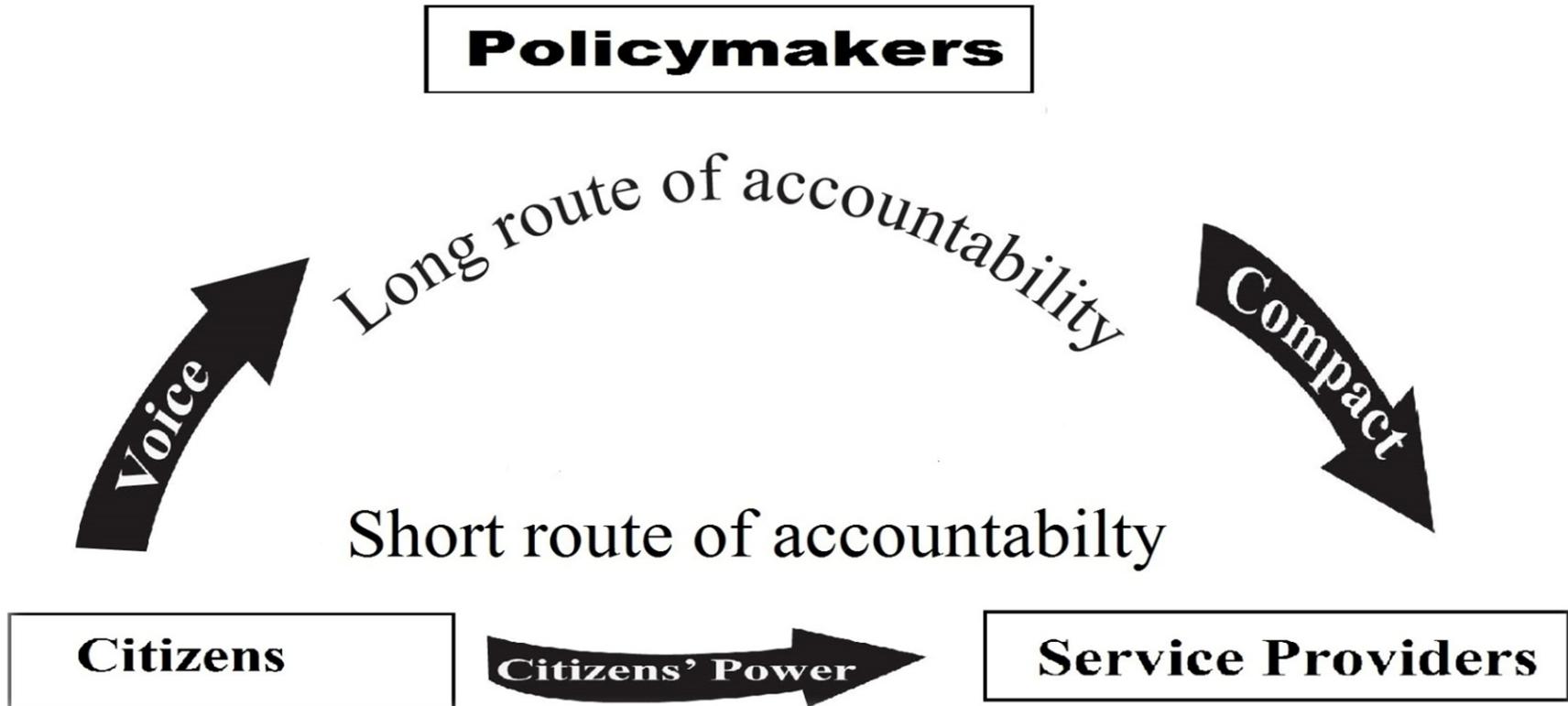
3. Baseline Survey on Social Factors Influencing Corruption (February 2015)

- The study uses a multi-stage random sampling strategy. A total of 3060 households were interviewed for the survey, 2040 households from the project areas and the 1020 households from the control areas of five districts of Bangladesh.

3.1 Perceptions about forms of corruption

- ❑ Bribery (93%)
- ❑ Fraudulent practices (forging documents, cheating) (73%)
- ❑ Denying justice (69%)
- ❑ Extortion of money/property (50%)
- ❑ Land grabbing (43%)

3.2 Perceptions about severity of corruption:

Most corrupt departments include

❑Police (96%)

❑Judiciary (54%)

❑Ministry of Health (31%)

❑Land Administration (26%)

❑Education (24%)

4. Public Hearing

- Public hearings are formal meetings at the community level where citizens express their grievances on matters of public interest to local officials providing public services and suggest measures to improve the situation.

- Public hearings aim at promoting transparency and accountability of public authorities in addressing the needs of the citizens.

- Article 21(2) of Constitution of Bangladesh mentions about public servants to strive at all times to serve the people.

- UNCAC stipulates participation of society in decision making process (Article 13).

- National Integrity Strategy (NIS) of the Government of Bangladesh underscores the need for providing corruption-free public service to citizens.

6

- The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Bangladesh has adopted public hearing for empowering citizens to monitor corruption-free public services.

- ACC organizes public hearings in collaboration with Corruption Prevention Committees at the district and upazila levels.

- The focus of public hearing is land related issues like registration, land administration and health.

- Based on the feedback received from public hearings, the ACC is holding dialogue with government organizations for improving service delivery.

4.1 Findings of Public Hearing

Based on the experiences of about 500 citizens who participated in public hearing in 14 sub-districts of Bangladesh

4.1.1 Corrupt Service Delivery

- Every government department is vulnerable to corruption
- Land registration and land administration, health and police appear to be the most corrupt departments
- Gatekeepers at every turn
- Poor quality of service
- Long queues at delivery points
- Multiple visits to government offices
- Service is a mercy – not a right

4.1.2 Reasons for corruption

- Service delivery system is highly centralized with no participation of people
- Lengthy and cumbersome process of public service delivery
- Too many intermediaries
- Controls in lieu of facilitation
- Heavy reliance on manual system
- Lack of incentives
- Too much discretionary authority
- Absence of exemplary punishment for corrupts leading to a culture of impunity

5. Concluding Remarks

An effective anti-corruption policy may include the following:

- Creating citizen awareness regarding corruption prevention
- Involving citizens in public service delivery through social accountability framework
- Reengineering business process
- Reducing discretionary authority
- Switching from manual to automated system
- Recognising the 'champions' of accountability in public service
- Undertaking follow-up action on public hearing
- Developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels