

Thematic Strategy Paper

Strengthening Public Institutions (SPI)

**Prepared by
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List of Acronyms

CARTA	Citizen Action for Results, Transparency, and Accountability
COPE	Creating Opportunities for the Poor and Excluded People
CPI	Corruption Perception Index
CSC	Community Score Card
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CSGs	Citizen Support Groups
DFID	Department for International Development
EPR	Excluded People's Rights in Bangladesh
FFW	Food for Work
FYP	Five Year Plan
GAF	Governance Advocacy Forum
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GRS	Grievance Redress System
IDP	Information Disclosure Policy
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
LEBs	Local Elected Bodies
LF	Logical Framework
LGs	Local Governments
LGI	Local Government Institutions
LGSP	Local Government Support Project
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MJF	Manusher Jonno Foundation
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NDP	National Development Plan
NFSP	National Forum for Social Protection
NGO	Non-government Organisation
NSSS	National Social Security Strategy
OAA	Old Age Allowance
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
RTI	Right to Information
SA	Social Accountability
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMCs	School Management Committees
SPI	Strengthening Public Institutions
ToC	Theory of Change
VGD	Vulnerable Group Development
WB	World Bank
WCA	Women & Children Affairs
WGI	Worldwide Governance Index
WASA	Water Supply & Sewerage Authority
UDC	Union Digital Centre

UHFWC	Upazila Health and Family Welfare Centre
UK Aid	A British Initiative for International Development Assistance
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
YDD	Youth Development Department

1. Introduction

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) is a national Non-government Organisation (NGO) that promotes human rights and good governance through funding, policy advocacy and capacity building of NGOs and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). MJF assists in supporting entitlements of the people by building their capacity to demand basic services and raise voice against rights violation through support to the local /national CSO's and peoples movements. MJF also works on the supply side to promote organisations responsiveness towards the demands of the people, especially the poor and marginalised. MJF's work includes policy advocacy which has facilitated enactment of some most progressive and pro-poor laws and policies of the last 15 years. MJF is known for testing innovative approaches and willingness to take risks.

MJF has gained credibility over the years as an organisation with high standards of financial and programme accountability along with an effective monitoring and evaluation system capable of reporting on achievements, results and lessons learned. MJF is governed by a nine-member Governing Board comprised of eminent personalities from civil society.

MJF received grant from Department for International Development (DFID) in 2002 as a project of CARE Bangladesh to implement HUGO (Human Rights and Governance) Project. After successful completion of four years under CARE management, MJF started its journey as an independent organisation, obtaining registration from NGO Affairs Bureau and Joint Stock Company. Since then MJF has received A British Initiative for International Development Assistance (UKAid) grants in two more phases. In 2013, MJF received over 26 million GBP for the Creating Opportunities for the Poor and Excluded People (COPE) Project which was completed in June 2017. In October 2017, UKAid awarded a 5-year Project titled '**Excluded People's Rights in Bangladesh**' (EPR) to MJF.

MJF Vision:

A world free from poverty, exploitation and discrimination where people live in dignity and human security.

MJF Mission:

Promotion of human rights and governance through partnership with different stakeholders including duty bearers to ensure dignity and well-being of all people, especially the marginalised.

Major programmatic areas are:

- a. Tackling Marginalisation & Discrimination (including rights of ethnic people theme)
- b. Security and Rights of Women and Girls
- c. Decent & Safe Work (Protection of Workers and Working Children)
- d. Youth & Social Cohesion
- e. Strengthening Public Institutions

Moreover, two other cross cutting issues i.e. Disability and Women Economic Empowerment integrates with all other programmes.

This thematic paper encapsulates the five-year (2017-2022) strategic plan built on strengths and experiences of previous years of MJF. The paper includes lessons learned, contextual realities, EPR Business Case, priorities of 7th Five Year Plan (FYP) of Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and a series of consultations with all level of MJF staffs, stakeholders and experts. The paper clarifies specific challenges associated with thematic issues, programme brief, programme implementation approach, coverage, intended key results, Theory of Change (ToC) and monitoring mechanism for the next 5 years.

2. Strengthening Public Institutions

Strengthening Public Institutions (SPI) Programme focuses on selected public institutions blending the dynamics of citizens' engagements that use various social accountability tools. This will help ensure effective public service delivery i.e. health, education, agriculture, social security, conservancy, water supply and other Local Government (LG) services etc. Another key focus is capacity building of duty bearers and grassroots citizen so that transparency and accountability is ensured at the selected public sectors at the same time common people are able to raise voice and demand their entitlements

Definition: SPI can be defined through three major parameters. These are; a) how far duty bearers, e.g. public institutions, fulfil obligations towards the rights-holders, b) to what extent right-holders i.e. people have space to express their needs or raise voices and c) whether mechanism, rules, regulations and overall systems are people-oriented and able to engage people into the development process.

Public Institutions encompasses public services delivery institutions at local level. This includes health, family planning, education, water, sanitation, conservancy, agriculture, livestock, and communication improvement, etc. services delivered by Local Government Institutions (LGI) or government agencies. MJF will work with local institutions those are providing services, like- health, agriculture, primary education, social security, water-sanitation to the people at community level. The institutions are- a) LGIs, like- *Union Parishad (UP)*, *Paurashava*, *Upazila Parishad*, b) Primary Health care service delivery institutions, like- Community Clinic, Health sub-centre, Upazila Health and Family Welfare Centre (UHFWC), Upazila health centre, Department of Health and Family Planning at upazila and district level, c) The services of the department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Livestock at union and upazila level, d) Government primary schools, e) Water and sanitation services include the services of LG, public health, Water Supply & Sewerage Authority (WASA), f) Social security services include services of the related departments at union and upazila level.

Public Officials implement the strategic direction provided by the political leadership and deliver public services to citizens. They are accountable to bureaucracy. LGIs also have bureaucratic accountability; at the same time the elected officials in LGIs have political accountability to their constituency.

Capacity Building is the process of enhancing abilities to perform better. It improves knowledge, skill, attitude, practice, systems and values. Both formal (viz. - training) and informal (viz.-working together) approaches can be applied for capacity building. Capacity building of public institutions focuses on improving openness, inclusiveness, accountability and consistency in taking decisions and discharging services.

Governance is the process of decision-making and decision-implementation. It denotes how institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources.

Governance Performance is to measure progress towards good governance and the best service delivery by an institution.

Open Government is a concept which stipulates that citizens have the right to access the documents and proceedings of the government to allow for effective public oversight.

Citizens provide the political leadership with the authority to govern and expect in return effective governance and public services. In this document, the term citizen, people, community are used to make that contextualized in a similar meaning.

Social Accountability is an approach towards building accountability that relies on civic engagement, i.e., in which ordinary citizens and/or civil society organisations participate directly or indirectly in extracting accountability. The following Social Accountability (SA) tools are commonly used: Participatory Budgeting; Public Expenditure Tracking; Community Score Card (CSC); Social Audit; Public Hearing; Community Report Card; Citizen Monitoring of public service delivery, etc. (In light of World Bank's SA Source book).

3. What Causes Mal-governance in Public Institutions?

The local services offered by national departments are inefficient due to lack of accountability and coordination. Quality of health services through UHFWC is poor; 46% service recipients were not satisfied with the services¹. School Management Committees (SMC) are highly politicised and reluctant to perform their duties. Absenteeism and irregular attendance of teachers results in quality of education (Third party monitoring, COPE, MJF, 2014).

Uddin (2008) stated that agriculture service provided by the Department of Agricultural struggle due to absence of service delivery staff in the area which is caused by weakness of supervision and monitoring; the study also concluded that absence of village based farmer organisations hinders demand creation². COPE Project experience revealed that absence of proactive disclosure of service delivery provisions are one of the major contributors to institutional inefficiency. On the other hand, citizens' scope to interact with institutions is limited. Institutional committees where citizens can join with its process are mostly dysfunctional; 90% standing committees are inactive due to lack of Local Elected Bodies (LEBs) awareness and sensitisation³. The common problems of the local public institutions are 'inadequate citizen engagement, lack of accountability, transparency and inefficiency of the local public institutions which hinders service delivery to the people, especially to the poor and marginalised'.

Although the national budget is expanding but LGIs' portion remains low. Besides resource constraint, public institutions are suffering from various governance related problems which results in their services to be less effective and does not adequately reach the people, especially to the poor and marginalised sections of the society. Although government policies reflect commitment to following a participatory processes in the service delivery, local institutions lacks capacity to do so. LGIs of Bangladesh suffer from human and monetary resource constraint, inadequate capacity of doing business including planning, budgeting and

¹ Seddiky, M.A., and Rahman, A.T. (2015). 'Role of Union Health and Family Welfare Center (UH&FWC) to Promote Maternal Education and Reduce Child Mortality Rate in Bangladesh'.

² Uddin, M. N. (2008). 'Agricultural Extension Services in Bangladesh: A Review Study'.

³ Islam, T.M. (2017). 'Understanding the effectiveness of union parishad standing committee: a perspective on Bangladesh'.

governance. The local development plan and their budget prepared by LGIs are not linked to the national development plan and budget.

After ten years of continuous support through Local Government Support Project (LGSP), the study⁴ stated that out of 75% UP that conducted *ward-shava*; 40% were 'satisfied' and only 10% were 'highly satisfied' on quality.⁵ 83% UP did not follow operation manual for implementing LGSP properly⁶. Another study revealed that only 20.8% citizens know about five years plan of UP⁷. For the service delivery, local institutions lack of transparency, improper beneficiary selection and corruption. Another similar study found that 52% excluded respondents reported improper selection process and 41.18% Old Age Allowance (OAA) beneficiaries reported giving bribery to get the entitlements⁸. Citizens are generally unaware about most processes of these institutions.

4. Situation in Bangladesh

Poor governance situation in Bangladesh is recognized as a strong impediment to ongoing poverty reduction efforts, and is subject to intense political and public debate. Despite the fact that Bangladesh has the ability to develop, poor governance obstructs the development of the country in many ways. There is an agreement that responsiveness of public institutions and decentralisation of powers can play a key role in improving governance performance and service delivery.

In 2021, Bangladesh will reach its 50th birth anniversary. By this time, the country has entered into lower middle income category and expects to achieve middle income status by 2021. Bangladesh has earned praise for the social and economic progress achieved in recent decades. The country has made impressive strides in meeting Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) through substantially reducing poverty, from 56.6% in 1990 to 24.8% in 2015 and maternal mortality from 574 to 170, although the target was 144, achieving gender parity in primary education enrolment, lowering child & infant mortality from 144 and 92 to 46 and 32 respectively, improving immunization coverage, etc.⁹ Government has firm commitment to achieve the SDG targets by 2030 and in accordance with that has aligned its 7th FYP for 2016-20. Despite the above impressive progress, the country is still unable to provide minimum basic needs and entitlements to almost 40 million people, half of whom are in the extreme poverty category. Inequality, both in income and consumption, remains a growing concern. Corruption prevails extensively due to lack of good-governance in public institutions. The Parliament and other state oversight institutions do not function independently. LGIs have limited authority and are authorized small portion of development fund. In such situation, poor and marginalised people are deprived and unable to get access to public goods and services.

Effective governance is seen as essential to achieve efficient use of public resources. This can happen if there is responsive public institutions, responsible and vibrant citizen groups-civil society, open information, etc. Ensuring better service delivery to people has been taken as the key priority for public

⁴ Yousuf, M., Hossain, M. M. and Rahman, S. (2014). 'Citizen Perception Survey on Services Delivery: Upazila Parishad & Union Parishad'.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ CARTA Independent assessment report, PTF, MJF and JSDF, Page-14, 2015

⁷ [http://www.bd.undp.org/content/dam/bangladesh/img/Projects/UZGP/Inner%20Final\(1\).pdf](http://www.bd.undp.org/content/dam/bangladesh/img/Projects/UZGP/Inner%20Final(1).pdf)

⁸ Mohiuddin, S.M. (2013). 'Effectiveness of Social Safety Net Programmes (SSNPs) in Poverty Reduction'.

⁹ 7th Five Years Plan 2016-20, GED, Planning Commission, GoB.

administration capacity building¹⁰. In order to reform the public administration, GoB has recently introduced institutionalizing citizen charter, annual performance agreement, grievance redressal mechanism, promoting digitization and e-governance, etc. Contemporary analysis of governance and development context of Bangladesh reveals the need for governance improvement of the public institutions.

State of Governance: Governance of Bangladesh has been scored at nearly middle status by most of the international surveys for the last two decades. Corruption Perception Index (CPI) has been changed towards positive from 17 to 28 out of 100 points in 2005 to 2017 respectively (Transparency International website). However, in the other governance areas, the status is seen downward in recent years. Worldwide Governance Index (WGI) has assessed country's government effectiveness 25.48% in 2016 a big fall as it was 38.86% in 1998. Similarly, the voice and accountability score is 31.03% in 2016, which was 47.26% in 1998. Political stability has also been severely disrupted; it is 10.48% in 2016, which was 33.91% in 1998.

Democracy, Parliament and Election System: The national Parliament is not strong enough to check and balance the power of the executive. Parliamentary democracy system has not been institutionalised; absence of effective opposition in the Parliament has been a chronic problem. The Caretaker Government system, considered as an appropriate election time government for Bangladesh since 1991, was disbanded before the 10th Parliament election held in 2014. The dominant opposition political parties boycotted the election since they were demanding for reinstatement of the Caretaker Government system.

Constitutional Mandate for Decentralisation and Local Government Institution: Bangladesh is a democratic republic. The goal of the nation was very clear and explicitly stated in its Constitution; which is - "It shall be a fundamental aim of the State to realise through the democratic process to socialist society, free from exploitation-a society in which the rule of law, fundamental human rights and freedom, equality and justice, political, economic and social, will be secured for all citizens". In Article 59 and 60, the Constitution explicitly mentioned about the formation of elected local government at all its administrative units and the functions that the LGIs to facilitate. However, LGs are dependent and controlled by the national government. The national government is implementing public services earmarked for LGs in the constitution. Although a few isolated initiatives have been taken for strengthening the decentralisation, the country is yet to take a 'national framework policy on decentralisation'. However, utility of LGIs in the local development, public service delivery and for democratic practices is evident. 'It has been predicted that the coming decades will witness a need for enhancing the capacity of local government and would demand active engagement and citizens' role in LG to ensure a sustainable economic development and a high quality of life'.¹¹

National Plan-Budget and LGI's Part: Country's financial ability has increased. In 2017-18 the budget is BDT 4,002 billion, which is five times higher than it was ten years back. The current development budget is about 1552 billion and major portion of the budget is spent for local development. Although the national budget is expanding, LGIs' portion remains very low. The local development plan and their budget that prepared by LGI's self-earned revenue are not linked to national Annual Development Plan (ADP) and

¹⁰7th Five Years Plan 2016-20 of Bangladesh, chapter-1, page-160

¹¹Political Economy of Local Governance: A Study of the Grassroots level Local Government in Bangladesh, by- Salahuddin M Aminuzzaman

budget. LGIs should formulate long term development plan, for five years at least, and that plan should be incorporated in the national five years plan.

Digital Bangladesh: Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in its digital Bangladesh initiative. Mobile phone subscribers now exceeds 130 million and internet reaches to 8 million, while e-commerce and online transactions are progressing quickly. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are used in education and health services. E-Governance is also expanding- central public procurement using online process, government forms and applications can be processed through online. All of the LGIs, around 6000 units, will soon be connected to the national server. Nearly 5000 union digital centres have been established and are offering people to use digital devices.

Disaster, Climate Change and Safe Drinking Water: Bangladesh is a low-lying country and vulnerable to frequent flooding, long term water logging and cyclones. It will be badly affected by any rises in sea levels. Due to climate change affect, traditional production and livelihood pattern are becoming ineffective in many areas. Climate migrants are thereby putting greater pressure on the cities. Besides, the 7th FYP core targets in the context of vision 2021 has committed safe drinking water for all. This has been addressed in our current programme design. It is estimated that through the EPR interventions 295,000 people will have access to safe drinking water. SPI Programme theme will cover nearly 50,000 out of that. Likewise health issue is addressed in the respective goals of SDG and the 7th FYP, MJF's EPR Project will help 420,000 citizens to get health services from government agencies where SPI portfolio will contribute to the largest portion.

Human Rights Situation: Bangladesh is one of the signatory states of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). However, violation of human rights and fundamental rights is a common phenomenon- violent behaviours and religious extremism is also spreading. The powerful are getting away after committing crimes and the culture of impunity exists. The Freedom House Report 2016 scores situation of rights in Bangladesh 49 point out of 100 with a downward trend due to series of murders, enforced disappearances, attacks on minorities, cross fire deaths, violence against women and girls, attack by Islamic militants, increasing restriction on press freedom etc.

Right to Information: The Right to Information (RTI) Act 2009 allows the citizens to seek information from authorities. However, the status of information seeking is very low, only 6,369 in a year¹². Most of the people remain unaware about the law especially the poor and vulnerable groups, women, ethnic & other minorities and inhabitants of geographically backward areas. On top of this, attitude of the duty bearers is still not pro-people, the relevant institutions lack capacity on information management, and people are not willing enough to claim information as needed.

Social Security Programme: In spite of a steady economic growth and appreciable progress in poverty reduction, 39.2 million people of the country are still living below poverty; 20.4 million of them are the extreme poor¹³. The 7th FYP seeks to reduce poverty rate to 18.6% and extreme poverty to around 8.9% by FY20. Thus social security issue is addressed in the goal of 7th FYP with due emphasis. Inequality, both in income and consumption, remains uncontrolled. National social security strategy was approved in 2015; however, the implementation process remains unchanged. Corruption is rampant while targeting and

¹²Annual Report of Information Commission 2016

¹³7th Five Year Plan of Bangladesh

disbursing social security services. For instance, 27% of Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) beneficiaries are not poor (Rahman & Hulme 2014), leakages in the Food for Work (FFW) Programme is 26% (WB 2006), Beneficiary selection process, in most cases, is not transparent. Absence of citizen engagement and lack of poverty database widens scope for misuse and corruption. Bangladesh has already instituted a large number of social security programmes to help the poor with particular attention to the extreme poor. The set target in it is to increase the spending on social security programmes as a share of 2.3% of GDP. The set targets in the very first goal of SDGs (end poverty in all its forms everywhere) cover social protection for poor and vulnerable.

Citizen Monitoring and Feedback on Public Services: The culture of taking citizen feedback is not common in public sectors of Bangladesh. Physical existence and bill-vouchers-documentations are the key consideration in measuring the accomplishments of government projects. Impact and value for money are often remain unevaluated. A few government projects have recently introduced taking beneficiary feedback. MJF and some other NGOs are assisting local level institutions in using Social Accountability (SA) tools such as Citizens' Score Card (CSC), Social Audit, etc. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), MJF and some other NGOs are supporting the government offices in developing citizen charter, *ward-shava* and open budget meeting, displaying development plans by the LGIs. Public offices such as the Offices of the Deputy Commissioners are conducting weekly public hearing meeting, however, their effectiveness remains a big question. The Cabinet Division has developed a guideline on Grievance Redress System (GRS) in order to make public services effective and efficient through online lodging of the grievances for quick redressal of those grievances. These initiatives should be expanded down up to local levels.

5. MJF's Previous Work

MJF works with individuals, communities, LG and the national government simultaneously. This is because change needs to happen at all levels starting from the attitudes and awareness of individuals, up to legal and institutional reforms. Our interventions are based on the underlying causes identified above. Our approach is to increase the awareness of individuals and communities and help them organise themselves in order to collectively demand their rights from the State. We work through our partners NGOs and CSOs located across Bangladesh.

6. Lessons from Previous Work

MJF previous programme experience demonstrated that citizen engagement can play a vital role to make the public institutions more accountable, transparent and effective. Capacity building is required for both supply and demand side. Lack of capacity, at both ends, acts as barrier in terms of better service delivery by public institutions. The capacity to use SA processes, transparency and access to information are effective for the marginalised section of the society to get their entitlements. Such practices result in making interactive relationship among the citizens, government officials and LG representatives.

MJF learning from COPE Project (What worked well)

- MJF experience shows that citizens can play a vital role in advocating and assisting to make public institutions more accountable, transparent and effective. There are many evidences on citizen

engagement around the world; however, the challenge is its institutionalisation. In Bangladesh, citizen engagement in the functions of LGIs especially in the planning and budgeting has been expanded taking learning from GO-NGO collaborative programmes like-UNDP's Sirajgonj Project and CARE's UPWARD Project, WB's LGSP. The LG (UP) Act 2009 has included 'Ward-shava', Open Budget Meeting, Standing Committee, Citizen Charter, etc. that gives mandatory provision for citizen engagement in the important institutional functions. However, most of the UPs require technical and in some cases financial assistance for and effective conduction of these participatory processes. One of MJF projects provided evidence with seven indicators showing community participation in the UP increased by 77% compared to 11% before intervention¹⁴. Thus the new programmes aims to assist LGI-working units to facilitate above mentioned activities more effectively.

- It was observed that capacity building initiative for the government officials and civil society members was more effective when the relevant government officials take part in the process. Combination of group representatives and progressive elites can bring synergy to influence change.¹⁵ The new programmes will initiate context based group member selection and expand the procedure based upon learning.
- COPE experience also shows that use of SA tools is effective for holding duty bearers accountable and raising demand by duty holders. It also helps to enhance awareness and minimize corruption. It was also found that Participatory Planning (*ward-shava*), CSC, Social Audit, and Public Hearing are the most useful tools to make local authorities accountable; However, Citizen Charter was not as effective for the institutions that offers multiple services. The new programme intends to promote use of these tools and also to introduce institutional budget review & analysis tool.
- A study revealed that only 17% designated officers were capable of responding to RTI applications correctly and 36% were partially correct¹⁶. RTI has been identified as a key tool towards the promotion of human rights and good governance. This is properly addressed in one of SDG's goals which targets ensuring RTI as a fundamental freedom. The 7th FYP has set RTI-specific targets under one of its goals. RTI has also been addressed in the ToC of UK Aid Direct as output. In MJF, RTI is used as a cross-cutting tool across all its programmes. Previous MJF experience showed that there are huge gap in awareness of RTI as well as capacity of public institutions in preserving information- which is also supported by the report of Information Commission Report 2016. Majority of the citizens are not aware of the advantages of using RTI Act, which has resulted in less use of the Act. People are not likely to apply for the information without being accompanied by the outside assistance. At the same time, most of the service delivery institutions are not equipped, viz. - digitization of information, trained personnel, to respond to the information requests. Thus the new programmes intends to work both at grassroots and policy level that cover capacity building, awareness programmes, campaign etc.
- Taking citizen feedback is a growing idea as one of the governance improvement initiatives. GoB has recently introduced 'public hearing' as a process of public service administration. MJF and some other institutions have been assisting public institutions in organizing and mobilizing citizens, collection of the evidences and their presentation so that the public hearing is done effectively. MJF will do policy

¹⁴ Lessons Learned through Social Engagement for Budgetary Accountability (SEBA) project, published in July 2017.

¹⁵ Key lessons paper form COPE Project 2017

¹⁶ Country Analysis on Status of Implementation of RTI in Bangladesh, Study conducted by Manusher Jonno Foundation, October, 2013

advocacy for introducing citizen feedback to the monitoring and completion report of the projects and services.

- Participatory governance performance and capacity assessment is effective for institutional capacity building. In COPE Project, MJF introduced the participatory tool that involved both citizen and institutional representatives to assess governance performance and capacity of the LGIs which was very effective to build ownership of concerned institutions in its capacity building plan.
- Aligning the advocacy instruments to the government relevant policies and plans provides favourable paths for necessary policy reform. For instance, experience of piloting the GRS by MJF has motivated the cabinet division to introduce innovative strategies for collating grievances. Based on the recommendations of GRS piloting, cabinet division decided to develop mobile apps and a dashboard for receiving service delivery related complaints in the national GRS portal;
- Process of country's decentralisation is very slow. Despite having progressive acts for the LGIs of Bangladesh, implementation of those is weak¹⁷. Citizen voices need to be organised for demanding 'Transfer of subjects to LGIs' which will eventually expedite decentralisation process. The new programme will work to expedite the advocacy agenda to transfer governmental roles and responsibilities on specific subjects to the LGIs.
- Active civil society platform at local and national level is useful for quick problem solving as well as evidence based advocacy on local government issues. During COPE period, MJF governance projects introduced multi-layer citizen forums at ward, union, upazila, district and national level. It was, evident that 'Government service providers were more effectively able to respond to the needs of the poor and marginalised. The increased dialogue between organised citizen groups and service providers was, in some cases, a catalyst for change'.¹⁸The new SPI Programme will take initiatives for capacity building of these citizen platforms to further strengthen vertical linkages between bottom up grassroots mobilization and top down policy implementation and oversight.

What did not work well

- GPM- COPE Programme experience showed that only local level advocacy is not enough for effective service delivery. Sharing community monitoring finding at local level can quickly resolve problems; however, some of the problems require meso level intervening and some requires policy or national level inventing. EPR programme will ensure all level intervention for effective service delivery by a local institution.
- Capacity and experience of the local NGOs in implementing social accountability organisations' varies greatly; thus the same capacity building approach for all does not work. In the EPR Project, organisational capacity on social accountability will be assessed and actions taken accordingly.
- Selection of appropriate SA tools is important for achieving its purpose. It was observed that some tools did not fit with every aspects of institutional functions and some required extensive data analysis. As an example, using Citizen Report Card requires certain technical competency; in the new programme, selection of the SA tools will be done jointly with partners before its application.

7. Programme Brief:

¹⁷ Monem, M., (June, 2015). 'Transferring Power through Transfer of Subjects to LG in Bangladesh'.

¹⁸ COPE Project Completion Review 2017 report, Key points at page- 10.

Goal: Poor, marginalised and vulnerable people enjoy better quality of life in a well-governed institutional environment.

Outcome:

- Public service delivery agencies (i.e. Local Government Institutions, Government of Bangladesh (GoB) agencies) are more transparent and accountable to the people, and responsive to the needs of people especially the poor, marginalised and socially excluded sections.
- Poor, marginalised and vulnerable citizens are more able to access material resources, services and opportunities

Outputs:

- Organised marginalised peoples are able to claim their rights and entitlements, fight discrimination and exclusion;
- Strengthened capacity of the public service delivery institutions (LGI and GoB agencies) to respond to citizen demands; and
- Strengthened capacity of citizen in the community to monitor the activities of government service delivery institutions.

8. Programme Approach

MJF approach is to facilitate empowerment, participatory planning, community monitoring and interface between citizen & service institutions; form citizen support groups; build capacity of the institutions; activate institutional committees; apply SA tools, RTI and GRS; support micro-macro linkage.

- **Facilitating Empowerment:** Identify the poor and marginalised people and mobilize them into groups. Disseminate information related to institutional services that they are entitled for. Involve them in the institutional planning process, like- *ward shava*, agriculture and other economic survey, safety-net beneficiary assessment, RTI application process, etc. They also take part in the public meeting and other interactions with their representatives to raise their demands and to ask their queries.
- **Forming Citizen Support Groups (CSG):** Multilevel citizen platforms will be formed at union, paurashava, upazila and district level. These groups will be oriented on institutional policies and procedures so that they can facilitate needs of the poor and marginalised people rightly. Multilevel citizen forums is effective strategy to participate in institutional functions and advocate effectively for the rights and entitlements of poor¹⁹.
- **Building Capacity of the Institutions:** Orientation and assistance on participatory processes like- planning, budgeting, resource mobilization, transparency and accountability, digitizing and disseminating information, response to citizen queries, grievances and RTI. Earlier experience showed that 93% Citizen Action for Results, Transparency, and Accountability (CARTA) Project UPs reported that they were aware of LGSP procurement process compare to 20% in non-project unions²⁰.
- **Facilitating Participatory Planning:** Identifying institution specific problems, facilitate joint action planning process for each working institution.

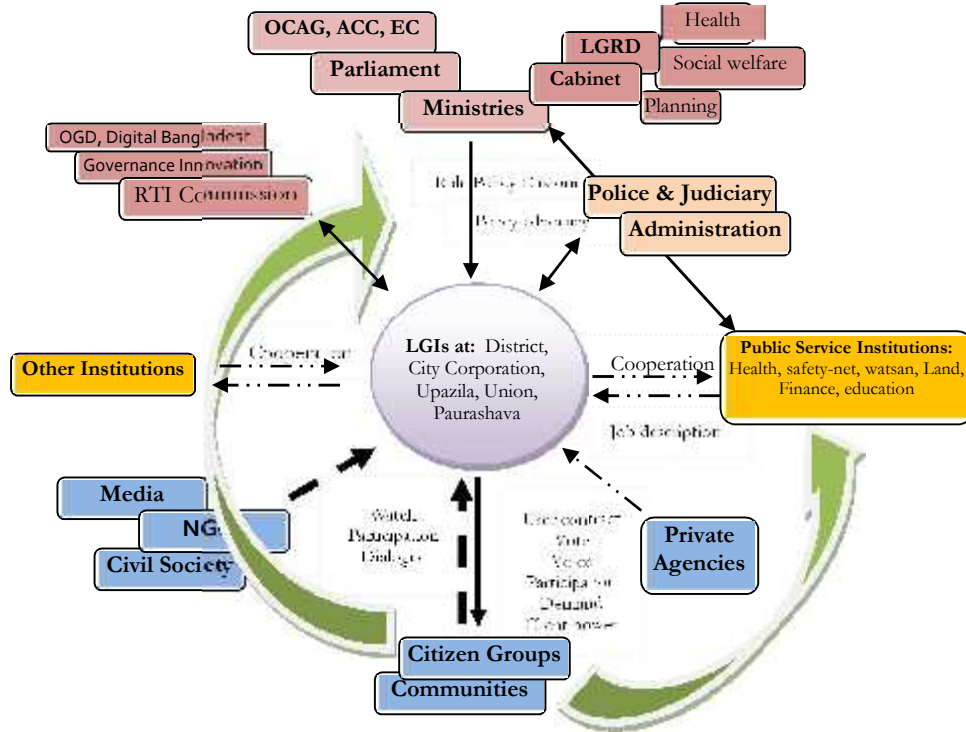
¹⁹ Programme Review of Ensuring responsiveness of Public Institutions report, page- 19, 2013

²⁰ CARTA (Citizen Action, Result , Transparency and Accountability) Independent assessment report, PTF, MJF and JSDF, Page-19, 2015

- **Facilitating Community Monitoring:** Institutional services are to be monitored by the citizens and using social accountability tools. Citizen Support Groups (CSGs) are to be oriented and assisted on how to use the tools.
- **Activating Institutional Committees:** Formal institutional committees, viz.- health centre management committee, standing committee, agriculture committee, are to be formed and functioned as per policy. The Programme will facilitate them to have specific scope of work, formulating action plan and monitoring.
- **Facilitating Interface Between Citizen and Service Institutions:** Service specific discussions will be conducted among local civil society members, citizen groups, representatives of service providers, recipients, LGI and administration to resolve existing problems and boosting services;
- **Applying SA tools, RTI and GRS:** Community will be encouraged and assisted to apply SA tools for enhancing governance & services, like- SA, RTI, GRS and other governance promoting tools. Successful services for poor people emerge from institutional relationships in which the actors are accountable to each other²¹.
- **Micro-Macro Linkage:** Supports to be given to extract policy issues from the grounds. Study, research and discussions may need to be conducted. National level civil society groups on related issues Like- RTI Forum, National Forum for Social Protection (NFSP), Governance Advocacy Forum (GAF) will bring these issues to policy makers.

²¹ World Development Report 2004, p. 46

Strategic Relationship among Institutions for Governance Improvement



ACC: Anti-corruption commission
 EC: Election Commission
 LGD: Local Government Division

LGI: Local Government Institution
 OCAG: Office of the Comptroller & Accountant General
 RTI: Right to Information

9. Programme Coverage:

- **Target Population:** Poor, vulnerable and marginalised people.
- **Target Institutions:** The SPI Programme will work with LGIs (union, upazila, paurashava and city corporation), Government offices - Social welfare, Women & Children Affairs (WCA) and Youth Development Department (YDD); Primary health care institutions (Community Clinic, UHFWC/HSC, Upazila health centre); Agriculture, Fisheries & Livestock services at Union and Upazila Offices, Education (Primary school, Upazila Education Office), Land Office (union and upazila level).

Target Geographic Location: Local institutions having low scores in government audit/ monitoring, especially in governance will be specially targeted.

10. Institutional Capacity of MJF

MJF has experienced and reputed staff with sufficient knowledge and expertise on local governance issues and expertise on social accountability and RTI. MJF expertise on SA tools and Third Party Monitoring has been recognized by different development partners.

The strength of MJF is its convening ability, to be able to bring different stakeholders together to collaborate and learn. MJF has strong partnership with local and national level CSOs plus with policy makers. Its policy advocacy expertise is known and recognized. It has a strong capacity building unit and financial & programme management mechanism. MJF will continue to work with networks and coalitions both at national and international levels.

11. Integration of Cross Cutting Issues

The following analyses will give guidance on how the stakeholders and beneficiaries will integrate cross-cutting issues:

Assistance to Other Programmes: SPI Programme will give assistance to the other thematic units of EPR Project and build the capacity to integrate governance issues in their programmes. It will also assist to set governance indicators and measure achievements. The programme will organize training on SA tools, orientation on local governance and RTI Law. It will also provide assistance to the stakeholders in developing Information Disclosure Policy (IDP), and network building on governance issues.

Gender Equality: Both men and women of different marginalised communities as direct beneficiaries of EPR Project will have equal rights and opportunities to get the intended benefits of access to government services. Female elected representatives will get high priority for getting training and other capacity building support will be provided by the Project. Women will have proportionate- at least one third-membership in the citizen support groups at different administrative levels so that women can assert their opinions. Capacity of community women leaders will be emphasised so that they can participate in the institutional process and procedures effectively. Leaders will be sensitised on gender issues.

Economic Empowerment: Gaining experience from COPE Project, the SPI Programme intends to introduce innovative programmes at LGIs for providing economic support to the poor and extreme poor people. The management of the SPI Programme follows participatory process- a tripartite committee governs the Programme. Through this innovative Programme, the LGIs get institutional skills for managing an exclusively pro-poor programme. The LGIs will also build linkages to the government departments at upazila and district level like-YDD, WCA, Social Welfare, Agriculture and Livestock Departments for instilling their services for skills building of the poor communities. The SPI Programme will directly benefit poor people especially the women in accessing to economic development activities.

Addressing Disability Issues: The SPI Programme will give special support to the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) so that they are able to get involved with local institutions. PWD's will be included with its community groups- at least 10% of its members. The Programme will ensure participation of the PWD's in the local level planning and SA events so that their voices are taken into account. The citizen support groups will stand in favour of the PWD and conduct dialogues with the institutions regarding equitable access, rights and entitlements. The SPI Programme will take initiatives for the PWD to get access to government social security programmes, health care services, water-sanitation, agriculture and other income generating services as their priority entitlements.

Similarly the portfolio will support ethnic minority groups in its working areas to participate in institutional processes.

12. Risk Analysis

Risk of Strengthening Public Institutions Programme will be dealt with by MJF's overall risk management strategies.

13. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL):

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) of MJF has developed its system in light of a rights-based approach. The MEL approach of EPR Project is focused on gaining knowledge and evidence and explore best practices to track progress and apply the learning to enhance the programme efficiency and effectiveness.

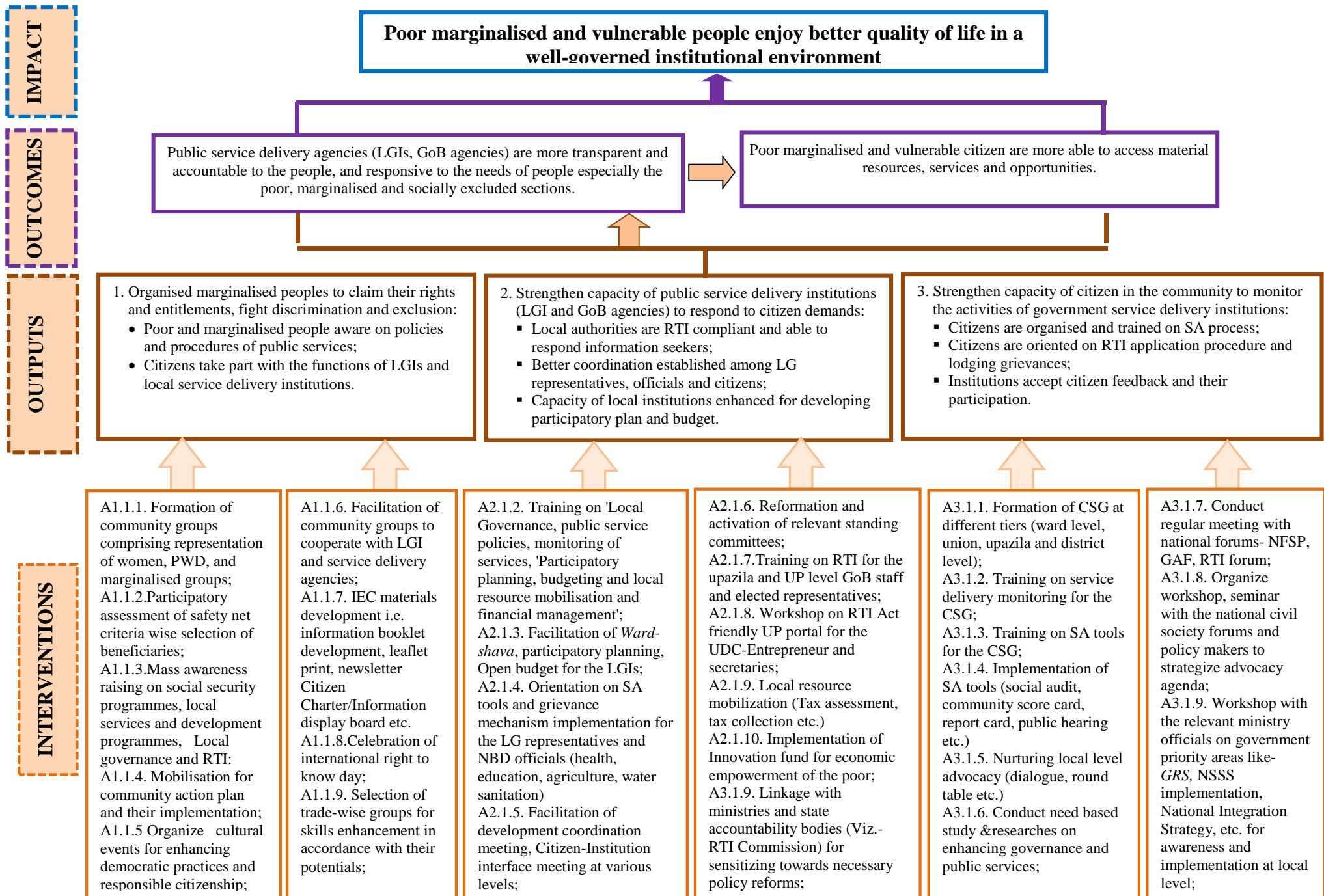
MJF will adopt a simplified Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system for the EPR Project, which will emphasize routine process monitoring and tracking results from the grassroots level. During inception phase, MJF will develop a detailed plan for process monitoring and framework for capturing evidence and learning. MJF has drafted a Logical Framework (LF) and ToC which will be revisited in line with the milestones and targets as per the LF. The LF and ToC, it will outline data requirements, sources, data collection and analysis, and how M&E will be undertaken, including key evaluation questions. The revised M&E system will guide MJF and its' partners' projects to track regular progress and capture changes.

M&E system will emphasize learning and sharing to gain critical analysis from a wide range of relevant stakeholders and embrace critical insights to fine tune programme strategies. This system will give emphasis on systematic documentation of lessons learned in EPR phase. A number of surveys and action research will be done to collect programme and projects M&E information, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Detailed indicators will be finalised through a participatory discussion process with DFID and MJF. However, some of the research questions and indicators are suggested in the following table:

Name of the Programme	Key research question (suggested)	Key Indicators
▪ Strengthening Public Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ How improved governance system increases access to services?▪ How SA processes influence public institutions for policy implementation properly?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Number of marginalised people gain access to the government provided services (health, education, agricultural extension);▪ Number of institutions disclose service related information;▪ Number of citizens participate in institutional decisional making process;

MJF will also develop beneficiary feedback mechanism to understand programme success, challenges in relation to strategies. MEL of MJF will communicate its evidences and changes to donors, other development actors, decision-makers, champions and other audiences, using a range of medium (report, documentation, sharing session, workshop, press& social media), and will use it to advocate for reform.

Annex 1: Theory of Change [ToC]



BARRIERS

- Marginalised citizens have limited access to claim their rights due to lack of awareness as well as threatening role of vested group;
- Inadequate understanding of local elected representatives and their fallacy on reducing vote bank hinder participatory planning and budgeting process, revenue generation, etc.;
- Government offices lack adequate resources, plan and accountable instruction for monitoring of local services at downstream;
- Citizen's feedback on public services has not been officially accepted;
- Many appointed designated officers lack training on RTI, Information are not digitalised, categorised and well managed.

PROBLEMS

- Marginalised citizens are disorganised and less aware about their rights, entitlements and institutional procedures;
- Inefficiency, political influence and corruption of local institutions hinder the service delivery mechanisms e.g.- social safety net, rural infrastructure development, water & sanitation, agricultural support, etc.;
- Lack of capacity and transparency of LGIs in participatory planning, budgeting and revenue generation;
- LG representatives and local public officials are not sensitised for their accountability to citizens;
- Government monitoring mechanism on public service delivery at local level is weak;
- LGIs- UP and Paurashava and local public service delivery institutions, viz.- Agriculture Department, Health center, Social Welfare, etc. lacks coordination.
- Citizens are ignorant about and less likely to apply for information under RTI Act 2009;