

Case Study Series: Learning from Innovative and Proactive Civil Servants

Case Title: **Ensuring Easy Access to Public Offices**

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The cases for this series have been collected by interviewing civil servants working in different South Asian countries. This collection initiative is an attempt to document different innovative initiatives taken by different civil servants and thereby encourage other civil servants to be more proactive and innovative. If you are aware of other such instances of innovation, please send us an email (parvez.yousuf@northsouth.edu), we will communicate with you for further details.

Ensuring Easy Access to Public Offices

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Challenges of Access to Public Offices

Problem

The general people face barriers when trying to access public offices, particularly to the office of higher-level officials such as the office of the AC Land.

Solution

The AC Land/Public officer installed a calling bell in the entrance with a notice that says to press the bell to get direct access to his office room.

Outcome

Now the AC Land's office room is more accessible to all general people who wish to meet him in person.

Mr. X is a civil servant in the Bangladesh Administrative cadre. He was once posted in an *Upazila* (sub-district) as an Assistant Commissioner, Land (popularly known as AC Land). Within a few days of his posting, he came to know from the locals of various problems they were facing at the AC Land office. The primary complaint was the hassle involved in seeking any help regarding land-related disputes, which Mr. X could corroborate from personal experience as well. For instance, a person that he had already met once to discuss his land-related problems was barred from returning to his office by one of the office assistants. The person had been falsely informed that Mr. X was not present. Many such incidents made him realize that several corrupt officials were exploiting people due to a lack of direct access to his office.

He understood that this lack of accessibility to public offices and relevant public officials causes great trouble to the public and hinders the quality of public service provided.

Easing Access to Public Offices

This prompted Mr. X with the idea of installing a “calling bell”- essentially, a doorbell at the entrance accompanied by a notice in order to ensure that no one could hinder people's direct access to his office room. The posted notice provided clear instructions, stating that, if necessary, the bell can be rung “for direct access to the AC Land's room”. He also instructed the other officials to allow people direct entry to his office if they wished to share their problems with him, warning of stern action should anyone hinders or intimidates the public from entering his room. The installment of the bell had immediate effect, increasing accessibility and becoming a service-friendly public office. This also resulted in not only pleasing the people who needed AC Land's services but also reduced corrupt behavior to some extent.

About the Authors

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