Exchanging Knowledge and Good Practices of Department of Social Services of Bangladesh

Social Media Shonglap (Dialogue)

Access to information (a2i) Programme
Prime Minister's Office Bangladesh

Prepared By
Results Management Team

USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Access to Information (a2i) Programme
Prime Minister's Office

UNDP
Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This report is an outcome of Social Media Shonglap (Dialogue) good practices of Department of Social Services of Bangladesh organized by Access to Information (a2i) Programme, Prime Minister's Office, Bangladesh on 05 June, 2017. We are grateful to the Chief Guest and Chair: **Md. Abul Kalam Azad**, Principal Coordinator SDG Affairs for his kind presence. a2i Programme would like to express sincere gratitude to **Md Zillur Rahman**, Secretary, Ministry of Social Welfare for attending the Conference. We are thankful to **Mr. Kabir Bin Anwar**, Director General, (Admin) Prime Minister's Office, and Project Director of the a2i Programme for his kind presence as a special guest. Special thanks to **Mr.Gazi Mohammad Nurul Kabir**, Director General, Department of Social Services for his presentation on the good practices of DSS. Special thanks to **Mr. Richard Kerby**, Senior Inter-Regional Advisor, e-Government Branch, DPADM, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Prime Minister's Office and **Mr.Wai Min Kwok**, Governance and Public Administration Officer, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations.

Background:

Social Service Department of Bangladesh is one of the most important departments of Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. They are playing a catalytic role in developing human resources of Bangladesh. One of the major initiative of DSS is "Social Safety Net" which is ensuring socio-economic welfare and the rights of Marginalized, Old, Orphan, Poor, Disable citizen and Jeopardized Child. Since 1961 to this date, Social Service Department is working for the underprivileged citizens of the society. The vision of the DSS is to end poverty and hunger and to make Bangladesh ICT based middle income country by 2021 and by 2041 to flourish Bangladesh as a developed country.

Purpose of the Social Media Shonglap (Dialogue)

a2i Programme organized this Social Media Shonglap (Dialogue). The topic of the Social Media Shonglap (Dialogue) was online activities of DSS with the purpose of;
1. Showcasing DSS's strategy and plans on how they are delivering services and their online
2. Inspiring different departments to use social media on delivering public services to the citizens at fast speed.
3. Raising awareness about the impact of citizen journalists and to outreach other citizens through Online.
4. Accelerating social movements to help underprivileged citizens of the society.
5. Identifying issues that need to address implementing different SDG's.

Organizations of This Conference:

The conference held on 5 June 2017 at Prime minister's office. Mr. Kabir Bin Anwar, the Director General (Administration) of the Prime Minister's Office and Project Director of a2i Programme graced the Conference with an opening speech, whereas Md. Abul Kalam Azad, Principal Coordinator SDG Affairs presided over the Conference. Among others, Md. Zillur Rahman, Secretary, Ministry of Social Welfare, Gazi Mohammad Nurul Kabir, Director General, Department of Social Services, Richard Kerby, Senior Inter-Regional Advisor, e-Government Branch, DPADM, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Prime Minister's Office and Wai Min Kwok,

Governance and Public Administration Officer, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations were also present at the conference. On the other hand, officers of all the social service department of six districts were present in the conference.

Discussion:

Kabir Bin Anwar, Director General, (Admin) Prime Minister's Office, and Project Director of the a2i Programme in his commencement speech stated that a2i is working via social media especially in delivering public services. This is ensuring the involvement of the journalists and the citizen journalists through social media on different issues of the community. This online procedure is assuring the term "Leaving No-One Behind" by taking the underprivileged citizens under

their services. In the past, Manual procedure of giving allowances had many challenges; many deserving citizens were left out. In the past, the administration took many initiatives to prevent it, but it would take long time to solve the issues. Today, In Digital Bangladesh anyone can get involved in the welfare of community or society through online. In one hand, this is encouraging an innovation cultures in different departments of the government on the other hand, a2i is showcasing this initiatives by social media which is inspiring citizen journalists to participate in the welfare of citizens.

 Gazi Mohammad Nurul Kabir, Director General, Department of Social Services explained that, a project has been launched with the assistance of a2i to train the marginalized citizens so that they can earn their living expenses. Already a project piloting has been finished in Gopalgonj Tungipara. In the future, 80 units and 2 socio-economic centers all together 82 centers will be opened for giving skill development training which will help to create the beneficiaries as an asset for the country.

Richard Kerby, (Senior Inter-Regional Advisor, e-Government Branch, DPADM, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Prime Minister's Office) pinpointed on the issue of co-creation and how individuals can develop contents regarding on the works of the government in the field level. The contents would give a clear idea on how the services have been delivered and what were the challenges and how government can make it better in the future. In his opinion, the government could spend money to hire people and verify the works or they can assign volunteers which would save costs. Volunteers will work as a part of government section, they will collect data which will give right information, and then they can use social media to extend the grasp of the people. He also added that Bangladesh Government is doing excellent job with the citizen journalists but it can be taken one step further by involving them with the decision-making process, by these way citizens can be used as an avenue and vehicles for modification and collection of the data. Government also can use them as a marketing tool. He encouraged all the citizen journalists to go one step further and to create contents that can be created and co-created by the citizens.

Md Zillur Rahman, Secretary, Ministry of Social Welfare said that Most of the cases were presented in this social media Shonglap (Dialogue) includes Old Age Allowance, Widow Allowance and Disable Allowance. Other allowances are also given by DSS. Such as- Transgender Allowance, Assistance for Cancer, Kidney and Liver Cirrhosis Patients, Grants for Residents in Government Orphanages and Other Institutions and so on. Particularly Social Media is helping to focus on the cases which were missed out by the administration. This is ensuring "Leaving no one behind" by including socially excluded citizens. He thanked the citizen journalists who have posted about the marginalized citizens on Facebook. DSS is trying to cover every underprivileged citizens of this country under Social

Safety Network. The Prime Minister of Bangladesh started to give different allowances in 1997-98. At present, the number of the beneficiaries has become 160 million, expectation have sored that 15 million will be added in the next fiscal year. In this case the prime minister will allocate 4 thousand million taka on these cases. Where in the past underprivileged citizens didn't get any money, now 3-4 million citizens are getting allowances from the government every year. In the next fiscal year, government has decided to invest 700 million for re-constructing the buildings which were built at 60-70th century. 11,000 officers of DSS are working as a citizen journalist too. An innovative approach has been taken from the example of Brazil. In Brazil, a helicopter goes to the house of the beneficiaries to provide them allowances in their home. A bio-metric sim card will be given to the beneficiaries of Bangladesh so that if they go out of their residents still they would get their allowances. Some Banks has agreed upon these idea and they told that their officers will distribute the allowances to the beneficiaries at their home by riding bi-cycle. This initiative will be implemented by next year which will help this whole system to be 100% transparent.

Md. Abul Kalam Azad, Principal Coordinator (SDG Affairs) highlighted three points in his statement, 1. Citizen Journalists could be given incentives for their good works which will eventually encourage them. 2. Social Welfare Department of Bangladesh is fulfilling women empowerment, assistance for freedom fighters, Social Safety Net initiatives. In that case the officers should work with sincerity. The government officers should also assist the citizen journalists. 3. Good practices should never stop and other departments should also follow the example of DSS.

Social Media Shonglap (Dialogue) is playing catalytic role in cultivating innovation in public services through Online. Social Media Shonglap (Dialogue) is ensuring social development by helping marginalized, underprivileged citizen to get socially included to have different social services. Marginalized citizens are getting socially and financially included to the mainstream society through this process. Social Media Shonglap has brought transparency in providing services to the citizens. It has also implemented data management system by where information's on the beneficiaries can be examined whether beneficiaries are being included in the system or not. It has created awareness among service provider as well as service recipients and stakeholders about different services and

the easier way of giving services. This initiative has also ensured sustainability as it has a follow-up system on the beneficiaries. Field Administration is sharing and exchanging the good practices of one area to another which is spreading in the whole country. Higher officers give instructions and way forward to others online. Social Media Shonglap (Dialogue) is ensuring innovation in public services. Incentive system is encouraging field officers to ensure Social Inclusion and Leaving No One Behind. This kind of Social Media Shonglap (Dialogue) is assisting in sensitizing, motivating and inspiring service provider as well as service recipient.

Every branches of Department of Social Services all over the country have joined the Social Media Shonglap (Dialogue) through online. Officers gave their opinions and took many advices from their seniors during the dialogue. This conference was broadcasted live on Facebook. Citizens as well as others joined this conference in Facebook live. Social Media Shonglap has become a communication portal between higher and sub ordinate officers to discuss about various activities directly.

Conclusion

Social Media has paved an innovative approach to ease in the way of giving services to the citizens. Social Service Department of Bangladesh is utilizing Facebook to provide the needs of the marginalized citizens. Facebook is acting as a communication bridge between the underprivileged citizens and the citizen journalist. This initiative will go further if the citizen journalist starts to work more actively and sincerely to serve the citizens.