

Strengthening the Management Information System of Department of Women Affairs

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The Department of Women's Affairs (DWA) was created in 1984 to take on the joint responsibilities of the Bangladesh Women's Rehabilitation and Welfare Foundation created in 1972 and the Women's Affairs Cell created in 1976 under the Ministry of Social Welfare and Women's Affairs. This ultimately became an attached department under the Ministry of Women's Affairs first created in 1978 and later renamed as Ministry of Women and Children Affairs in 1994. The current mandate of the organization includes awareness building/sensitization of women's issues especially their rights and privileges, skill development, prevention of violence and repression against women, support to develop women's organizations for literacy, health care, income generation and empowerment along with their enhanced awareness about environmental protection. The mandate also calls for close collaboration with voluntary and non-governmental organizations. Special emphasis is placed on poverty alleviation by addressing distressed women both in rural and urban areas. The Ministry Women and Children Affairs (MWCA) is the apex policy-making agency with respect to DWA and hence all policy matters are decided there (CDS, December 2000, Page- 3.)

The Need For Strengthening of the DWA

Yet to the utter surprise, even after 16 years of creation, most of its activities are seriously constrained by poor management, lack of properly trained and committed staff at the local level, inactive local coordination mechanisms and a shortage of trained manpower. The Department of Women's Affairs Programs are further constrained by repeated reorganization as well as a lack of inter and intra-ministerial coordination and repeated transfer of program personnel. Presently the Project Planning, Evaluation and Appraisal (PPEA) section of the Department of Women's Affairs obtains information from field offices and project

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offices to monitor the progress of activities. The data supplied by the field offices are sketchy, often inconsistent and inadequate to cover even the limited range of activities under the Department of Women's Affairs. There is not any scope in the reporting forms to provide meaningful information on women's NGOs and other activities included in the job description of District and Thana officers. In addition, a data verification system is completely absent i.e. proper inspection, supervision, and monitoring program objectives and proper importance to accurate statistics and objective oriented record keeping is not given. As a result, non-reporting and incomplete reporting is a common phenomenon. The data submitted by the project offices are mainly confined to financial and physical progress of implementation and do not convey a coherent picture of how the stated objective of each individual project is being realized in terms of quantifiable targets. The data received from the field and project offices are manually compiled by the PPEA section into monthly reports for submission to the MWCA and other government agencies. There is no systematic feedback to program personnel on their performance based on the data collected. Moreover, data collected from different sources do not provide complete information in each of the systemic program areas for planning and implementing the programs. Conducting research studies and undertaking surveys would be useful in filling in the gaps of knowledge. It is evident that the MWCA and its implementing agencies are entrusted with challenging tasks for which they need to develop their capabilities and thereby their effectiveness in implementing all works related to National Action Plan (NAP), National Women's Development Program (NWDP) and Institutional Review CDS, December 2000, Page - 4.)

Therefore, the existing management capabilities of the Department of Women's Affairs needed to be strengthened to plan, coordinate, monitor supervise and implement its programs effectively. ((CDS), December 2000, Page - 4.)

Project Undertaken for Strengthening MIS of DWA

3. A project name: Strengthening the Management Capability of the Department of Women's Affairs, Bridging Project (2nd phase) was undertaken with a cost of Taka 175.96 lac to be implemented within October 2002 to September 2004. Ultimately the project cost was revised and fixed Taka 193.56 lac. Project implementation schedule was also changed and extended upto June 2004. According to the Project Paper (PP) project was taken with a view to:

- a. Strengthening and extending the computerized MIS activities introduced in the 1st phase of the project entitled "Strengthening the Management Capability of the Department of Women's Affairs" in 22 old districts and 66 selected Upazilas of 22 districts (3 Upazilas of each 22 old districts) and establishing network linkage of divisional offices with DWA HQ under Local Area Network (LAN) of MIS through Web Base Internet and make arrangement of sending the data in the server of Head Office through MIS Web Base from 6 Divisional office.
- b. Inspection forms and formats along with guidelines introduced in the first phase of the Project, are to be implemented in the 22 old districts and 66 Upazilas of 22 districts of Department of Women's Affairs.
- c. Strengthening the activities of the district and upazilla WID co-ordination committees formed by Cabinet Division in the 1st phase of the project.

The project was duly started and ended. Target and achievement of the main components of Project upto May 2004 are depicted in the following chart:

(Tk. in Crore)

No.	Work components as per PP (with quantity)	Estimated Cost	Achievement upto June 2003		Target for the year 2004		Progress upto the month of May 2004	
			Fin.	Phy. (% of the component)	Fin.	Phy. (% of the component)	Fin.	Phy. (% of the component)
1.	Equipment 123 pcs	0.6346	0.4827	122 pcs (99.19%)	0.09	1 pcs. (0.81%)	0.0812	1 pcs. (0.81%)
2.	Renovation No-1	0.018	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.	Training 200 person	0.0844	0.04218	154 per (77%)	0.0159	46 per (23%)	-	-
4.	Workshop 118 person	0.0559	0.00629	28 per (23.73%)	0.01	90 per (76.27%)	0.00671	25 per (21.19%)
5.	Manpower(17P) 558 mm	0.4793	0.34271	(17P)454 mm (81.35%)	0.24	(17P)204 mm (36.56%)	0.13301	(17P)187mm (33.51%)
6.	Furniture 76 pcs.	0.0275	0.02678	77 pc (101.32%)	-	-	-	-
7.	Others LS	0.6359	0.42421	LS (66.71%)	0.2541	LS (39.96%)	0.14195	LS (22.32%)
Total		1.9356	1.32487	-	0.61	-	0.36287	

Source: DWA

The project strengthening the Management Capability of the Department of Women's Affairs is a special one, which has a long term notable

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objective, being to assist the Government of Bangladesh in realizing its declared policy of mainstreaming women's issues and concerns into the development process. To achieve the desired aim similar project was undertaken as 1st phase having the following objectives:

- a. To assist the Department of Women's Affairs to improve its management capability at different operational levels; and
- b. To set up a computerized information system for efficient planning, monitoring and evaluation of programs and projects.
- c. To assist the GoB in realizing its declared policy of mainstreaming women's issues and concerns into the development process.

The project (1st phase) plans to have built the capacity of the Department of Women's Affairs in such a way that:

- a. Annual work plans specifying inputs and expected results will routinely be prepared at the district level and below;
- b. Women in Development (WID) Coordination Committees will be formed and actively participated by representatives at the district level and below;
- c. Increased supervisory visits to Thana and NGO project sites will take place;
- d. Reports on supervisory visits will be prepared;
- e. Information on monitoring will be collected, analyzed and interpreted for providing feedback to the project managers; and
- f. Activities will be carried out according to updated job descriptions (updated job descriptions are given to District and Thana Women Affairs Office and followed up by them for one year).
- g. Innovative actions will be taken to solve operational problems (CDS, December 2000, Page - 7.)

Project Description

The Strengthening the Management Capability of the Department of Women's Affairs project' is a TA project of the Government of Bangladesh with the development vision, particularly Women's development. It aims to establish gender equalities in every sphere of life by addressing gender gaps and mainstreaming women's development. The project is guided by the principles of the Constitutional guarantee, NPAW and the NAP for implementation of Beijing Platform for Action. The 1st phase of the project is implemented by the MWCA and executed

by SWA during June 1996 to September 2000. It was designed to enhance the institutional capability of the Department of Women's Affairs, for enabling it to play its lead role in mainstreaming women's development as per the declared policy of the Government of Bangladesh for advancement of women in overall development process. The project was a pilot one implemented by the Department of Women Affairs in its selected 5 Districts (divisional) and 15 Thana (under those respective districts) were called as the Project Area (PA). The project's interventions were designed in three components, i.e. Management, Management Information System (MIS) and Women in Development (WID) (CDS, December 2000, Page - i.)

It also called for monitoring of WID aspects in ongoing development programs from the national machinery including the WID Focal Points mechanisms of the different line ministries through the districts and Upazilas WID Coordination Committees down to the local level. These steps paved the way to establish structural linkage form national level down to the Upazila level and facilities in bringing the women folk of the grass root level in the mainstream of national development. (Department of Women's Affairs, September, 2002, Page - 10.)

After completion of the 1st phase this project (2nd phase) is formulated again with three components i.e. MIS, Management and WID aiming to achieve the following objectives:

a. MIS Activities:

- i. Strengthen and extend the computerized Management Information System (MIS) activities introduced in the 1st phase of the project and currently on going in the 2nd phase entitle "Strengthening the Management Capability of the Department of Women's Affairs (2nd Phase)" in 22 old district and selected 66 Upazilas (3 Upazilas of each 22 old districts).
- ii. Establish a computerized network linkage in between the Department of Women's Affairs (DWA) and the Ministry of Women and children Affairs (MWCA) through Internet/E-mail to restore and transmit all information regarding the women development.
- iii. Establish and enhance the computerized network linkage and MIS activities between 6 (six) divisional offices and head office of the Department of Women's Affairs (DWA) through Internet/E-mail.

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- iv. To store all information regarding the women development aspects, development projects running under the Department of Women's Affairs, personnel information of the DWA, revenue programs etc. in the '**DWA-MIS**' software prepared in the 1st phase of the project and still developing in the 2nd phase as database files.
- v. To represent the '**DWA-MIS**' software as '**DATABANK**' of the Department of Women's Affairs.
- vi. Enhance the Local Area Network (LAN) activities in the Department of Women's Affairs.

b. Management Activities:

- i. Inspection forms and formats along with guidelines introduced in the 1st phase of the Project are now implementing in the 22 old districts and selected 66 Upazilas of the Department of Women's Affairs will be continued.
- ii. Strengthen the activities of the Inspection and Monitoring Cell established in the 1st phase of the project located at the head quarter of the Department of Women's Affairs.
- iii. Impart workshops and seminars to the concerned officers of the DWA for effective performance of their roles and responsibilities in the women development aspects.

c. WID Activities:

- i. Strengthen the activities of the districts and Upazilas WID Coordination Committees formed by the Cabinet Division in the 1st phase of the project and currently working in the ongoing 2nd phase of the project.
- ii. Rendering training to the members of the WID Coordination Committee including the concerned project officers of the Department of Women's Affairs to perform their responsibilities effectively.
- iii. Coordinate and follow up the activities of the WID Focal Point with the activities of the WID Coordination Committees.

Implementing the projects DWA has established a Computerized Management Information System having the following eleven (11) Sub-Systems(CDS, December 2000, Page - ii.)

- a. Personnel Management System of DWA.
- b. DWA Physical Programs Evaluation System.

- c. DWA Financial System: Allocation & Expenditure.
- d. Vulnerable Group Development (VGD/UPVGD) Information.
- e. Group Leader Extension Worker Information System.
- f. Prime Minister's Fund: Micro Credit & Loan System.
- g. Development Projects' Monitoring System.
- h. WID Co-Ordination Meeting Monitoring.
- j. Beneficiary Information & Follow-up.
- k. Supervision Monitoring System.
- l. Prevention of Violence Against Women.

The District and Than (D&T) Women Affairs Offices have supplied the MIS with data inflow and outflow and made the System operational; and finally under the management intervention, introduced the annual activities work plans and updated DWA's inspection and supervision format for D&T Women Affairs Officers. So, the overall capability of DWA has shown a substantial strengthen because, it has established a framework of continuous development process has formed WID Coordination Committee covering all working areas of DWA and established an MIS for Monitoring & Evaluation of all activities of DWA for all levels of the management (CDS, December 2000, Page - ii.)

Recommendations:

The MIS project is critically observed and on the basis of observation following recommendations are made:

- a. It is recommended that further strengthening of the management of the Department of Women's Affairs (DWA) should be done by replicating the project's activities/programs in all areas of DWA, because the project is a pilot one implemented in a limited few locations, there is room for improvement and replication (CDS, December 2000, Page - ii.)
- b. After a rigorous trial run, a Computerized Management Information Systems (MIS) was established by the project. Computerized MIS training should be imparted to the top and mid level managers for usage of MIS in decision-making and for policy analysis. D&T Officials also need the MIS Systems for evaluating their subordinates and their programs performance. Moreover, through MIS, progress of programs and projects and the process - activities could be documented and reported with details and in accuracy. It will produce the information support as for the following:
 - i. The computerized Human Resources Management (HRM).
 - ii. Project Monitoring System.
 - iii. Field Programs Evaluation and Financial System.

- iv. Violence Monitoring System.
 - v. VGD-WFP Wheat Monitoring System.
 - vi. WID Coordination Committee Monitoring System etc.
- c. It is recommended that MIS should be replicated to all the Areas as a tool for the top Governmental Officials to know about information flow for decision-making process. e.g., on computerized Human Resources Management. It is also recommended that forming the new project for MIS replication supported with modern IT amenities, the MIS programme should be replicated throughout all D&T of DWA. It should be eventually taken to revenue set up for continuity in future (CDS, December 2000, Page - iii.)
- d. It is also recommended that using Computerized MIS, the NCWD's inter-ministerial activities should be monitored / followed up as a framework of development. As well as, provisions should be kept in MIS, so that in a greater context it can perform monitoring of National Action Plan for Women through MIS, in order to keep in track of women's advancement for the transparency of development efforts. Any re-adjustment in planning and program designing by top-level GoB personnel, and implementation of new projects to be done using real information from the field. Women's development programs are sporadically addressed and activities are scattered, MIS will give holistic approach, which will develop and operate one-shared women's knowledge base (CDS, December 2000, Page - iv.)

Conclusion

Hence, after the implementation of the project and at the establishment of Computerized MIS programs, the coordination is established between the field and head office of the DWA and MIS has incorporated the programs to follow-up and monitor the functions of the NAP. Under this project the government's policy statement aiming the women's development activities should reach the grass-root level, is being fulfilled and the mainstreaming goal is realized in a greater extent. Due to the introduction of computerized MIS a satisfactory level of performance of the project is marked. And the DWA officials have the scope to play role in transforming the government of Bangladesh's declared policies into actions. So, further replication of this project to non-project areas will strengthen the capability of the DWA officials and its field officers. The project should be replicated in all areas of the Ministry and of the Department of Women Affairs, in turn; it will create the opportunities for all women. (CDS, December 2000, Page - iv.)

References:

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Project Proforma (PP), Strengthening the Management Capability of the Department of Women's Affairs (2nd Phase, 1st Revised), Govt. of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs Department of Women's Affairs, September, 2002, Page - 10.