

Covid-19: Innovative and Humanitarian Role of Field Administration in Managing the Challenges of Pandemic Situation at the Grassroots Level

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Abstract

Since January 2020, the effects of the outbreak of the pandemic began to be felt in different sectors of the economy of Bangladesh. Timely and appropriate steps taken by our government through field administration and their effective implementation, Bangladesh has been able to successfully overcome the catastrophic situation created by the Covid-19 pandemic. We know Covid-19 pandemic caused by the novel coronavirus has so far infected countless people worldwide and caused about 6.3 million deaths. The whole world was devastated by the economic crisis caused by the pandemic. Field administration, under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has provided many humanitarian services during the pandemic period as well as adopted various services including coronavirus vaccination program for all and thus saved Bangladesh from massive loss of lives. As directed by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, the Government formulated a comprehensive program with short, medium, and long-term goals consisting of four main strategic blocks to address the crisis and its adverse effects on the economy which was implemented through field administration. This study investigates the performance appraisal of Field Administration from the service receivers' point of view, impacts of service delivery in terms of maintaining good health, food security, fight against Covid-19, overcoming poverty, generating employment opportunity etc. It is worth mentioning that finally, this study finds positive perception and supportive response from grassroots people due to services provided to them during pandemic by the field administration.

Introduction

The Covid-19 has become a pandemic crisis worldwide since January 2020 and will continue indefinite period of time. In our country, the first affected was identified in March 2020. Already it has caused great loss and sufferings to our economy. Especially it caused unqualifiable loss to our grassroots poor people and median class people in Bangladesh like other parts of the world. The Government of Bangladesh has so far launched 28 financial and incentive packages worth Tk. 1 lakh 87 thousand 679 crore and are successfully implementing them through field administration (Finance Division 2022b). In this way, field administration delivered services in a planned and integrated manner to ensure the benefit to a maximum number of people in the country. As a result, millions of people in the country were protected from the effects of the pandemic Government also provided food for about 13.9 million poor and low-income people who suddenly lost their jobs due to the outbreak of the pandemic. Besides, the government has sold rice at the rate of only Tk. 10 per kg among 7.06 million low-income families. To protect the poorest people during the crisis, government provided cash assistance amounting Tk. 2,500 to each of 3.5 and 2.7

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million selected groups of people during the first and second phases respectively. Government increased the coverage of the old age allowance and the allowance for the widow and the women persecuted by their husbands to 100 percent beneficiaries of the 262 poorest Upazilas of the country. Physically challenged people were brought under the disability allowance. Following the directives of the Hon'ble Prime Minister, field administration provided safe and decent housing to more than 7.5 lakh poor people including all above mentioned activities. (Finance Division 2022c). Looking at the current dynamics of the country's macroeconomic indicators, it is clear that Bangladesh has successfully overcome the adverse economic impact of the COVID-19.

2. Background of the Study

Due to Covid-19 pandemic, many people across the world affected greatly. Like other parts of the world, our economy was also affected. A recent study of CPJ (Centre for Peace and Justice 2022) shows that 20 percent (out of 1064 respondents) were unemployed and 81% lost their job due to Covid-19. It also shows over 80 percent people experienced adverse impact on their savings and assets. People of various classes are looking forward alternative sources of earnings. Given the limited social protection facilities and financial constraints, government of Bangladesh have been trying to support the poor and different classes of people with cash incentives and foods. Officers in Field levels with supports of political and public representatives of different levels work heart and soul to implement government's policy successful so that no one (who needs) left behind from government supports. In this connection, especially field administration is playing a key role by coordinating with different departments and implementing the policy taken. They have prepared the database of the poor people for cash incentives with help of local elected representatives.

3. Rationale of the Study

During pandemic, field administration was fully dedicated to provide humanitarian and innovative services to the grassroots people along with other government departments and local public representatives. Under the umbrella of district and upazila administration, a dedicated team with financial support from government and district administration discharged duties sincerely as per direction given. Field administration is not only implementing government policies and instructions but also taking various innovative measures for urban informal workers as well. Officers of field administration are working heart and soul since march 2020 without any incentives and many of them suffered from Covid-19 seriously. Of them more than 20 officers and about 40 support staffs died of covid-19 from field administration during pandemic. It is really difficult to realise the dedication of front line fighter's like- officers of field administration, doctors, police, armed forces and others. Still they are working together to help pandemic hit people.

4. Objective of the Study

The main objective of this paper is to identify the humanitarian and innovative role of field administration during pandemic situation in grass root level in Bangladesh. Other objective was to provide a clear understanding about how field administration can play crucial role in providing services and its impact on the economy and social life during ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

5. Activities of Field Administration in Managing the Challenges During Pandemic Situation

A high powered district Covid-19 preventive committee was formed by the government headed by the Deputy Commissioner of concerned district and in Upazila Level it was headed by the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO). Field offices performed many important tasks for the welfare of local people under direct instructions and supervision of the committee. Different and Upazila administration performed different innovative and humanitarian tasks in addition to their routine works for helping covid affected people in their locality. Some remarkable activities taken by different field offices during these pandemic situations are mentioned below.

5.1. Relief Distribution

Relief support was necessary to ensure that people can cope up with the new reality brought about by this pandemic. Many people lost their employment, many faced pay cuts whereas some switched to low paying jobs. All these resulted in the surfacing of new poor that never required relief support earlier. Moreover, the working class who even before covid needed govt. support to carry on had to deal with much harder conditions as economic activity was greatly shrunk because of covid. Relief programs that commensurate with these realities was key to maintain law and order and keep life ongoing for these people. The govt. responded with multiple supports programs through field administration. Cash and kind that worth millions have been distributed nationally. Field administration made sure that these huge relief programs are targeted properly and the people who need it the most are prioritized (Finance Division 2022a).

5.2. Conducting Mobile Court

Executive Magistrates conducted mobile courts relentlessly to make sure that people stay at home and follow prescribed safety protocols when they are outside. These courts served as a major deterrent factor for people that were initially reluctant to follow covid-19 protocols. To enforce lockdown or movement restrictions these courts exercised sections 269/270 of Penal code. Conducting these courts were particularly challenging in times of

covid since monetary penalty would mean extra financial burden whereas imprisonment for even a brief period of time was not an option since that might infect the other prisoners. This is why, mobile courts mostly focused on making people more self-conscious and

5.3. Ensuring home isolation

Home isolation of infected individuals is pivotal in containing covid. The field administration showed mammoth success in ensuring home isolation of infected patients. Many people who were infected with Covid did not develop any symptoms. These people had a strong affinity to go outside since they are apparently okay. Many believed it is harmless for them to go outside while many rejected the whole covid-19 scenario and thought this is only a made-up story or some sort of conspiracy theory.

Many still had a strong belief that covid-19 would not be able to do them any damage as flu or flu like symptoms are quite common in these lands. All these factors contributed towards breaking Covid protocols and not following home isolation. However, Field administration though suffered initially but with time took control of the situation and implemented home isolation by following different strategies. One such strategy was to lock down the residence of the infected individuals while sending them all the necessary items that would last them at least a couple weeks. They could also call and ask for anything they think they need which would be then sent to their house immediately. Fines, institutional quarantine and isolation were also other methods that were deployed to ensure home isolation.

5.4. Implementation of lockdown

Lockdown has been the most effective tool in containing the spread of the virus. It was particularly challenging to implement lockdown considering the fact that Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. The problem is exacerbated as people are not very aware and the concept of lockdown is quite novel. However, members of the field administration employed various carefully planned strategies to implement lockdown as and when imposed by the govt. For example, massive campaign programs were launched in the district and Upazila level to make people aware of the different aspects of lockdown. Social media was utilized to its full potential considering the significant presence of the youth in those platforms. Voluntary groups, union and ward level awareness committees were created to ensure proper implementation even at the root level. Proper compensation packages were offered to people whose income took hit because of the lockdown. Overall, all these resulted in successful lockdown periods that corresponded to lowering the graphs of covid infection and death.

5.5. Making different Apps

During Covid-19 Field administration took full advantage of the digital platforms. One key initiative was to make different apps that would cut down physical contact. For example, in many Upazila Administration designed apps with local expertise that promoted local online trading (The Daily Samakal 2020b, May 9).

5.6. Preparing lists for cash incentives by HPM

The PMO has taken an excellent initiative to help the most vulnerable segment of population with direct cash incentive. However, distributing this huge sum of money within a short period of time while ensuring the proper target individuals rendered great challenges to the success of this initiative. Field administration launched a great team work in quickly realizing this initiative into a reality. The most challenging of all was creating a database of individuals that fulfill the criterion set by the PMO. Enormous pool of data had to be amalgamated from each and every corner and should be fed into the system in a timely fashion to ensure proper implementation. Therefore, the work was divided into two major parts. Local UP chairman/member/ Village Police and govt. officers specially ULO/ULAOs worked restlessly to collect data whereas in the Upazilla Headquarter a team that consisted of AC(land)/PIO/AP and other experts made processed the data and input it into the system. UNO coordinated the whole project. All these resulted in largest cash distribution event in the country that immensely helped people to fight covid-19 financially.

5.7. Distribution of health safety products among mass peoples

Battling Corona successfully required that mass people have access to necessary safety products that includes proper masks, hand sanitizers, gloves, hand wash etc. Field administration provided millions of masks among common people and also encouraged them to wear mask whenever they are outside and follow other covid-19 related protocols. Public places were targeted for distribution of free masks where gatherings take place. Masks and other safety products were also distributed among other officers and staffs to make sure that they can discharge their duties while taking effective safety measures.

5.8. Ensuring alternative income sources for the distress people

The Covid-19 has affected the lower income people of the district very hard, reduced scopes to work at regular jobs for them such as agriculture, daily laborers, rickshaw pullers, peddlers and so on. The government has supplied free food materials, cash aids. Moreover, the administration also provided free or subsidized agricultural equipment's eg. Fertilizers, fish foods, cattle foods, machinery equipment's. different sources of small and medium scale loan was provided through the Polli Sanchay Bank, Upazila Youth development

Office, Upazila Cooperative offices, Daridro bimochon offices. Each Upzalia administration provided more or less taka 20 crore throughout the year as loan to the distressed people. The district and Upazila administrations has expanded the various social safety net programs such as allowance for widows, elderly peoples, handicapped persons and so on so forth. To strengthen their income capacity, the government level officials at the district and Upazila level provided training on agriculture, fish productions, cattle rising, ICT and various trades. The outstanding response and management of Government introduced toll free 333 phone call ensured no one in the district goes through starvation. The administration has been providing a quality of food packages consisting of rice, sugar, potato, salt, vegetables, edible oils, flour soon after they call from 333 of distressed people.

5.9. Ambulance Service

The government hospital of Upazila and district level have ambulance service for the residents at a very low cost. Each upazila has two to three ambulance in the hospital the district hospital has 6 full time ambulance. Apart from these, there are almost thirty private ambulances to render service throughout the district at any time. All the ambulance has modern equipment's and facilities to carry Covid-19 patients to the hospital (Al-Amin 2020).

5.10. Oxygen Service

All the government hospital in the district have enough amount oxygen cylinders to provide for the patients. Most of the non-governmental hospitals and clinics also keep oxygen supply for emergency care. Combined endeavor fro, the health ministry, district administration, Upazila Parishad have mobilized ample amount of fund to provide oxygen service to the newly infected and treating patients.

5.11. ICU unit at Upazila level

At the inception of the covid-19, ICU unit at Upazila level was rare. Soon after the breaking out of the virus, the government and local administration has managed 2/3 units of ICU at the upazila level. The district hospital has 12 ICU units so far. The authority has been trying to manage more ICU at the district and upazila level.

5.12. Ensuring social distancing

The committee headed by Deputy Commissioner in the district and UNO in the Upazila is responsible to ensure social distancing in the district and Upazila respectively. They coordinate local police force, Border guard, local public representatives and other stakeholders to make the social distancing effective. Upazila Nirbahi Oficer (UNO) and

Assistant Commissioner Land (AC Land) carry out mobile court drive to punish who doesn't follow social distancing rules. They patrol with the force all the corners of the upazila to find out any anomalies. Apart from these, the administration also carries out mass campaign to create awareness about social distancing in markets, office premises, and different public gatherings.

5.13. Awareness program

During pandemic situation field administration took various awareness program to make people conscious about the disease. Social media, electronics media, and other tools had been used to aware people forcefully. All these were very successful program to reach the people at root level.

5.14. Observing Mask week

District administration of different parts of Bangladesh had taken initiative of observing mask week during covid 19 pandemic situation. During observing this week, different field offices took different programs for preventing covid 19 by distributing masks among mass people, informing the usefulness of using mask in pandemic situation and different motivational program for using masks, maintaining social distance, preventive measures of covid etc (Hossain, M. S., Ferdous, S., & Siddiquee).

5.15. Arranging relief funds from local sources

Government of Bangladesh provided enough relief for poor and ultra-poor people during covid pandemic. These are distributed through Upazila and District Administration involving local public representatives throughout the country. In addition, some field offices arranged additional relief and funds for helping covid affected people by involving local elites and local leaders which was a great initiative by field offices. Through this initiative, many poor including lower middle class people benefited greatly who were out of social safety net programs of the government.

5.16. Direct purchasing agricultural products from farmers and use as relief

For the purpose of helping poor and ultra-poor people, local field administration of many places in Bangladesh purchased local products from local farmers and growers. Using these methods, local farmers and growers were greatly benefitted during pandemic situation using local resources.

5.17. Direct purchase dairy products and used as relief

Local field administration also purchased local dairy products as relief for the babies of poor family for the purposes of helping them during pandemic using local resources. As a result, dairy farms in rural areas became benefitted with this sort of transaction during pandemic which encouraged them to continue their production process and thus they covered their losses. It plays an important role in rural economy of Bangladesh during pandemic situation.

5.18. Alternative marketplaces for maintaining social distance

Local field administration arranged alternative market places in open places (school / college playground, open place etc.) in most of the areas in Bangladesh during pandemic. As a result, it helped a lot for maintaining a social distance which benefits a to prevent spreading covid in rural areas.

5.19. Market monitoring

Another important duty of field administration is to monitor market for restricting social gathering, hoarding and undue price hike during pandemic. It benefits greatly to the rural people and helps us to maintain price stabilization.

5.20. Arranging emergency home medical services

In some districts, emergency medical services like – Oxygen cylinder for serious covid patient, emergency ambulance service, emergency medicine supply etc. are also done by local administration during pandemic situation (CARE International 2020).

5.21. Monitoring TCB sales activities

Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) sale essential products at discounted prices across the country. Lower income people collect their products from TCB sales truck. In maintaining discipline and fair distribution, local administration worked with TCB and ensured satisfaction.

5.22. Worked with and for doctors

Though it sounds hazy but it is true that local administration cordially worked with local health department in providing covid treatment to affected people, managing seats/beds in hospital for patients, arranging special areas for covid affected peoples treatment, transporting them to the hospital, ambulance management for carrying patients, hotel management for doctors who were in duty for covid treatment, special treatment and

transportation (Helicopter) facilities for covid affected doctors in rural areas. These were totally humanitarian works for field administration for the betterment of rural people (Prothom Alo 2020d, May 13).

5.23. Door to door relief services (Hot line service)

The most important duties of local administration were relief distribution among the poor and lower middle class people during great pandemic. It was really a challenging job for reaching affected people with government assistance. During this situation, field administration arranged vehicles, volunteers and other man power for door to door relief services. District administration of Khulna and Rajbari successfully done this job (Prothom Alo 2020a, March 25).

5.24. Corona Control room, information services center

24 hours Control room and information service center in all DC offices and UNO offices were common during pandemic situation.

5.25. Introduce YouTube classes to continue educational services for primary students

Educational institutions have been closed since March 2020 due to the pandemic caused by Covid-19. This has caused nearly 38 million students in Bangladesh ("Combatting the impact of COVID-19 school closures in Bangladesh", 2021) to miss out from going to classes and receiving proper education and interaction to classmates and teacher.

The impact of closing educational institutions has been the most difficult for the primary students, for whom the real time interactions is the most important. To minimize the negative effect, local administration has instructed the primary school teachers to provide students with online education with interactive PowerPoint presentations, links to various educational content in online platform inducing YouTube, Ten Minute School and so on (Samakal 2020a, May 10).

Simultaneously, local administration has also encouraged students to continue their education at home via online platforms.

5.26. Law and Order situation with law enforcing agencies

Implementation of lockdown and shut down and other policies taken by the government has been a crucial part of local administration. Administration has successfully implemented country-wide lockdowns thorough regular and thorough monitoring of people's movement. Conducting mobile courts on a regular basis has also played a significant role in ensuring that people are abiding by the covid-19 protocol and movement regulations.

At the height of the pandemic in June 2020, more than a hundred the BCS administration cadre as executive magistrates, empowered to take legal actions through mobile courts, were appointed to conduct mobile court for ensuring rigorous lockdown across the nation to restrain the spread of the virus. Local administration co-ordinated with Police, Ansar and Armed forces whenever necessary to ensure the maximum protection of the civil people by curbing the high surges in coronavirus infections.

5.27. Awareness program for vaccination

The much anticipated vaccination against Covid has been rolled out in Bangladesh in January 2021. Before the arrival of the vaccine, people, especially elderly, were eager to receive the vaccine to remain safe against the deadly virus. However, after the emergence of vaccine, there was a massive surge of skepticism in general population. People doubted the authenticity and effectiveness of the vaccine. They also worried about the negative side-effects that the vaccine might cause. This mistrust and confusion among people were echoed in the low registration for vaccination in the first few days.

Field administration played an important role in mitigating the mistrust of people by increasing awareness among them. Employees of local administration were among the first to take the vaccine. This massive vaccine campaigns relieved most of the fears of people. Local administration also collaborated with NGOs and hospitals to increase awareness regarding vaccine. They also ensured proper vaccine distribution among the population through neat and organized vaccine campaigns. These successful endeavors resulted in significant increase in the number of vaccine registration.

5.28 Arrangement of Zanjaja/ Religious rituals

Due to the extremely infectious nature of the virus, people were extremely frightful of patients who have conducted covid-19. This also included people who died from the virus attack. People, even families, were not only reluctant to take care of, or be close to, infected patients. There were many incidents, where family have left sick or dead family member in the hospital and have not returned (Al-Amin 2020).

These people who die due to corona and were left by families were then taken in by the local administration and local administration performed the zanjaja or religious rituals. In many cases, administration had to face adversity since local people were extremely reluctant to allow dead people in the arena (graveyard/cemetery/burning ground) for last rituals to be performed.

However, despite the challenges, administration provided utmost support to these poor souls to ensure humane treatment during their last journey.

5.29. Motivational programs for youth

Adolescents and youths, albeit comparatively safe for covid-19 due to being young, passed an extremely difficult time during pandemic. With schools and colleges closed, no peer-to-peer connection, getting used to the virtual education system, all the while being afraid for their and their loved ones' lives, young people went to a challenging time (Hossain et al 2020).

On the other hand, with lower pressure from school, and no extra-curricular activities, youths had too much spare time in their hand. This was worrisome because it might increase the chance of them getting interested in bad habits like addiction to drugs and intoxicants, compulsion to commit to depraved activities. Local administration organized a number of motivational and engaging programs for adolescents, youths and young adults, depending on their respective age groups. For primary school students, competitions of art, dance, poetry recitation etc. were held while maintaining all covid-19 protocol and safety measures. Marathons and other engaging activities were held for youths to take part in. Invitation to various volunteering activities were also open and frequently engages college students to take part in college students were frequently encourages and given opportunity to help local administration in various safe drives like food distribution, arranging competitions, data collection and so on. These activities helped young population be engaged in positive activities and taught them to be active, responsible citizens of the future.

5.30. Closely working with health development for handling Corona Patients

Local administration worked closely with health department for treatment of general people affected with corona, arranged rituals and other formalities for dead bodies.

5.31. Management of industrial workers, workers in communication sectors, naval sector

Officials of field administration also had to handle workers in industries, road transport and naval transportation areas during pandemic when they try to make chaos. It was so difficult to handle the situation with law enforcing agencies.

5.32. Income Generation for Pandemic Affected People

Due to Covid -19 pandemic many garments, industries closed and as a result many people in Bangladesh became job less. In this situation, district administration in various districts took the initiative for creating employment generation activities for poor jobless people. Some field offices arranged rickshaw, Van (three wheels' vehicle), small capital for SME business for the distressed and affected people rural areas from their LR (Local Resources) fund and thus create employment opportunities for them.

6. Research Methodology

Research methodology is an important part of any research. It is the process of collecting data and different information for reaching the objectives of the research. It primarily focuses on the methods, tools and techniques of data collection and uses software to analyze those collected data. Different methods are used to collect data from respondents such as; surveys, questionnaires, face to face interviews and group discussions. I prepared questionnaires and collected data by face to face interviews with general people and from government officials. This study also incorporates both qualitative and quantitative research approaches which focus on asking questions. I use MS Excel for analyzing and interpreting those collected data.

6.2 Selection of the Study Area

Ten Upazilas of Khulna, Rajbari And Faridpur districts have been selected for collecting data for the purpose of this study. It is worth mentioning that those Upazilas are one of the pioneer areas in terms of covid crises management and thus it was the right decision to choose those areas for this thesis as I worked those areas during Pandemic situation. I was directly involved most of the activities of those areas. I paid official and personal visit around 30 unios of ten upazilas of those three districts during data collection period from February 15, 2020 to March 30, 2022.

6.3 Research Methods

In order to draw some inferences on the findings, it is necessary to analyze the collected data quantitatively. So, a combination of qualitative and quantitative approach is applied here to achieve the objectives of this study. In this research, the following methods are used:

- I. Content Analysis
- II. Interview (Face-to-Face Interview)
- III. Questionnaire Survey

Content Analysis: Content Analysis includes collecting data from all relevant books, documents, articles, journals, daily national and regional newspapers, electronics media and online articles that are found to be available.

Interview: For the purpose of this study, interviews were conducted in person i.e. face-to-face interviews were conducted by the researcher himself. The service seekers are the general people of the locality and their demand for services are simple and plain. The perception of the researcher is that one should deal with proper care in collecting information from them. That is why the interview was conducted with closed ended questionnaire for this purpose. The main objective of this method was to collect information about the perception of the citizens or beneficiaries regarding the role of field administration during Pandemic.

Questionnaire Survey: Survey with questionnaire is an effective method of collecting primary data. The semi-structured questionnaire survey method is conducted in this research for the purpose of collecting primary data about the role of field administration during Pandemic at the local government level.

6.4 Sources of Data and Sampling

The data are collected for this study from both primary and secondary sources. Secondary data are gathered from websites, books, newspaper reports and from various reports.

Primary data are collected through interview with the prescribed questionnaires. The government officials and beneficiaries are brought under the questionnaire survey and the interview method for collecting primary data. These personnel were brought under the random sampling for the purpose of structured questionnaire survey.

6.5 Sample Size

A total of 1010 (One thousand and ten) respondents have been selected from 30 (thirty) unions of ten different Upazilas under three different districts in Bangladesh. The composition of the respondents is as follows (Table-5.1):

Table 6.5: Composition of data collection areas and respondents

Research Areas	Categories of Respondents	No of Respondents
Dacooop and Dumuria Upazila of Khulna district, Sadar Upazila of Faridpur District, Sadar Upazila and Pangsha upazila of Rajbari district in Bangladesh.	Service receivers (General People) and Government Officials	1010

6.6 Data Collection Technique

For this research, different types of data collection methods were conducted to collect the primary data. The primary data were collected by using structured questionnaire (Appendix A) from key respondents and asking a set of questions (Appendix B) from service provider's interview. Data collection was done through direct interviews with respondents of various Unions under five different districts with the help of Upazila administration. Most of respondents from service seekers were uneducated or half educated. In this regard, I had to take help from Union representatives. Sometimes, I had to use some motivational techniques to get feedback from respondents.

7. Data Analysis, Findings and Discussion

This part presents the results of research findings derived from the primary data analysis by using quantitative and qualitative methods. In this part data are presented graphically (i.e; Bar chart, Pie Chart) and systematically by using MS Excel which shed light on research objectives and research questions. The aim of this chapter is to present the empirical results of the graphical analysis derived from content analysis and to discuss the results obtained from the data source.

7.1 Data Obtained from Beneficiaries: Findings and Analysis

This study was conducted from 15, 2020 to March 30, 2022 in three districts of Bangladesh. I have collected these data from 1010 respondents (beneficiaries & government officials) from 30 different Unions of 5 (five) different Upazilas (Sub-district) of three districts in Bangladesh. For the purpose of collecting data from respondents, I prepared a questionnaire which consists of two parts; one is a close ended questionnaire and another one is an open ended questionnaire.

7.1.1 Performance Appraisal of Field Administration from Service Receivers Point of View

The performance of field administration's officials is measured and analyzed based on the five principles of e-service delivery indicators. These are the most important indicators which need to be considered for evaluating the performance of officials of field administration. In this step of analysis, the performance has been analyzed on the basis of five principles of e-service delivery indicators. Officials of district administration are key persons who play a vital role for disseminating services during pandemic situation. The study found the assessment of skills of officials are evaluated by the respondents that are 30% very good, 25% good, 28% somewhat good, 10% poor and 8% very poor.

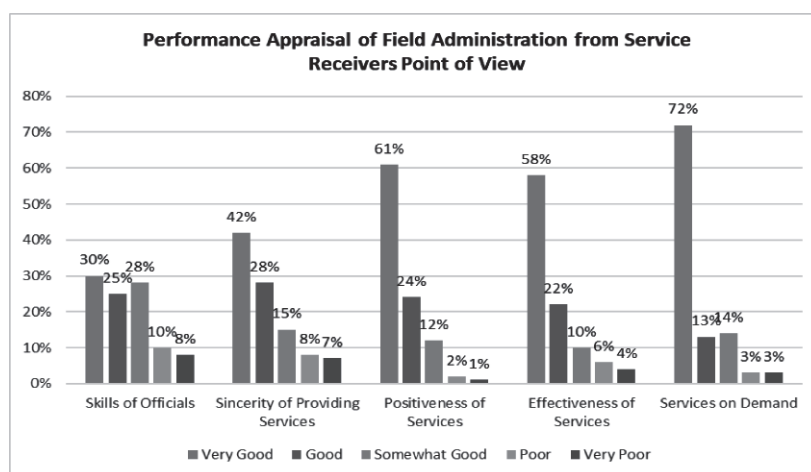


Figure 7.1.1 Performance indicators of Field Administration

In the case of field administration's officials, sincerity is very important for smooth functioning of Field Offices. The study revealed that more than 42% of respondents said their sincerity is very good but more than 15% said poor or very poor which is not desired at all for smooth functioning of government offices in field level. Government Official's job is salaried by the government and they are responsible for providing services to the people. Government provides logistics, training and other infrastructural facilities to them for rendering services to the rural people.

Positive mentality of government officials is also an important in rendering services to the people. The study showed that 61% of respondents said very good, 24% said good, 12% said somewhat good and less than 3% said poor or very poor attitude of officials towards service receivers when they ask for e-services from field offices. In rendering services to the clients, all sorts of negativity should be avoided. So, proper motivational programs and other supportive activities should be taken for ensuring a positive atmosphere in rendering services.

Finally, on demand service is another important indicator for excellent performance of government officials though it depends on many factors related to governance procedure. In this case, the study revealed that, 72% respondents said very good, 13% said good, 14% said somewhat good and 6% said poor and very poor. It means, on demand service is in a satisfactory level. Though it has not been completed yet, different government agencies are still working to fight against Covid-19 in different sectors in co-ordination with field administration closely. For example; Doctors are working in health sector, Police are working in maintaining law and order situation.

7.1.2 Impacts of Service Delivery

Field administration use different innovative and humanitarian ideas which provides door step services at the rural level in Bangladesh during Pandemic situation for last two and half years. After spreading Covid 19 in Bangladesh in March 2020 people in rural areas had no scope to get available health savings ingredients like-mask, hand wash, sanitizer to protect them from Covid-19 hazards. Food and essentials commodities were not also available for the poor due to countrywide lockdown. It was really a difficult situation for low income people to survive properly. At that time officials from field administration worked for them and made available everything including government assistance to the door steps of the rural people. District administration of different district distributed rickshaw, van etc for income generation of lower income and pandemic affected people in rural area.

To measure the impact of service delivery of field offices, we have to analyze the following indicators presented in the bar chart (figure 5.1.2) below.

During interviews, respondents who are experienced with activities were requested to express their opinion regarding the impact of services delivery on the above-mentioned variables. Proper service delivery has some impacts such as: 1. Maintaining good health, 2. Food Security, 3. Fight with Covid-19 & Properly Survival, 4. Overcome Poverty, 5. Employment Opportunity etc. By ensuring proper and smooth services, positive impacts will be created to a sufficient extent.

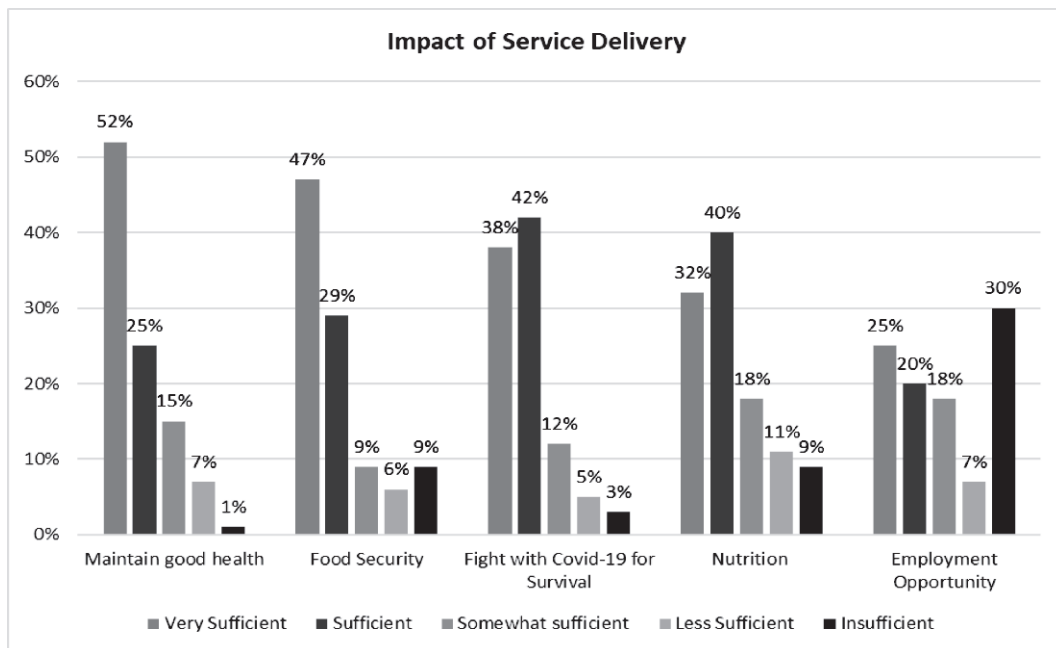


Figure 7.1.2 Impact of Service delivery

The study revealed that 52% of respondents expressed their opinion as very sufficient, 25% as sufficient, 15% somewhat sufficient and 8% less or insufficient in maintaining good health during pandemic situation. Food security or availability is another important indicator for getting the desired services. In this case, 47% are very sufficient, 29% are sufficient, 9% somewhat sufficient and 15% are less or insufficient food available. The study found that 38% replied very sufficient, 42% replied sufficient, 12% replied somewhat sufficient and 8% replied less or insufficient. By analyzing the responses, we found that more than 50% replied positively.

In case of Nutrition, the study found that 32% is very sufficient, 40% are sufficient, 18% are somewhat sufficient and 20% replied less or insufficient. On the other hand, in case of employment opportunity by field administration, the study found- 25% very sufficient, 20% sufficient, 18% somewhat sufficient and more than 37% are less or insufficient.

7.1.3 Beneficiaries Appreciation of Service Delivery Output

By analyzing figure 5.1.3, the study found that 48% of respondents said field officials maintained professionalism in service delivery during pandemic. They functioned their tasks smoothly and efficiently. In case of transparency & accountability, 31% respondents appreciated highly, 23% said medium, 21% said somewhat medium, more than 25% said low and very low performance. In the case of efficiency, more than 50% highly appreciated the works of field offices, and less than 20% appreciation was low. In case of beneficiaries satisfaction, the study showed more than 50% people in field level was highly or medium level satisfied with the services rendered by field administration during covid-19 situation when many people was afraid of coming out of home.

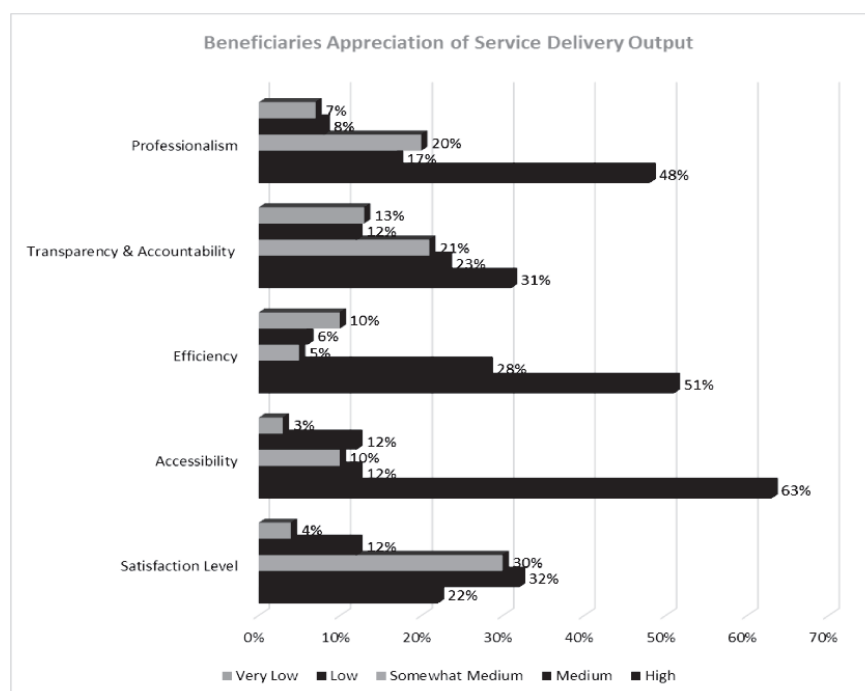


Figure 7.1.3 Beneficiaries Appreciation of service delivery output

7.2 Data Obtained from Officials: Findings and Analysis

The success of field administration depends on the combined activities of officials of Union Parishad (UP) and local administration. Without proper support from UP, local public representatives and local administration, it is not possible to run the activities successfully. Field officials of district and local administration are playing a vital and key role for smooth functioning in regards to proper service delivery in rural Bangladesh.

7.2.1. Available Services for Citizens

Door step service is the highest priority issue for the government to ensure peoples satisfaction and implementing government policies during pandemic period in Bangladesh as well. Before these initiatives, all government offices in Bangladesh provided traditional services to the citizens which took too much time. Sometimes, people did not even get their desired services.

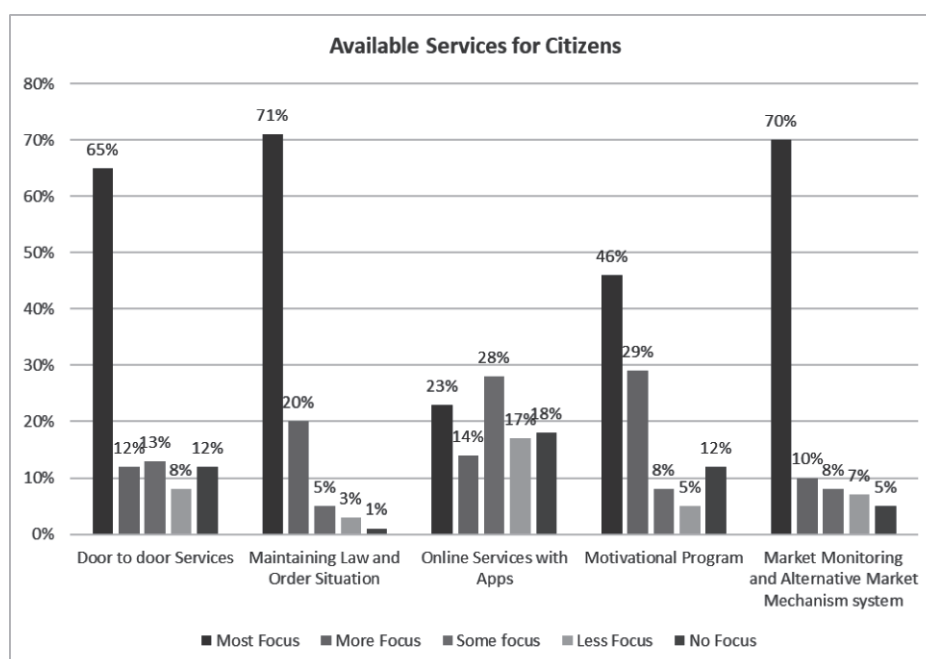


Figure 7.2.1 Available Services for Citizens

But after revealed Covid-19 in march 2020, people are getting door step service along with some other services. Law and order situation, market monitoring, social distancing , online apps service and motivational services are also provided to the people in rural areas from all sorts of government offices in Bangladesh. Not only in the government sector but the process also started in the private sector. In this regard, the study revealed most and more focus in some priority services areas for citizens which ultimately focused on the services mostly provided to rural citizens during pandemic by the local administrations since last two years for combating against Covid-19.

7.2.2 Challenges of Providing Services

It was very challenging to provide services to the people in rural areas by the field administration due to lack of experiencing of handling the covid situation for the first time, limited free movement, limited logistic and volunteers service, access to rootlevel people and limited support from Union or local representatives.

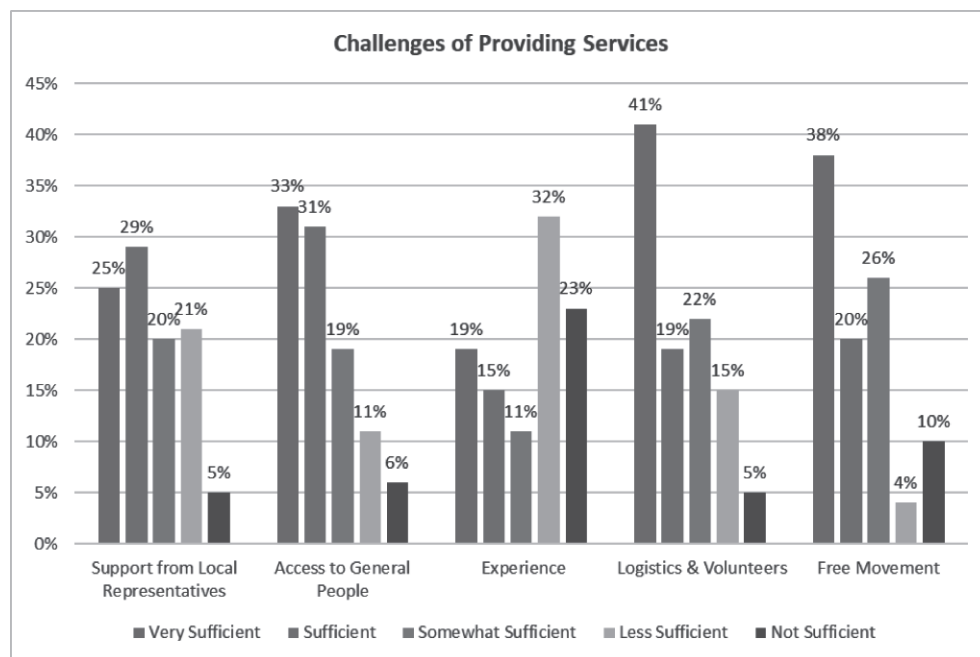


Figure 7.2.2 Challenges of Providing Services

Different field offices use their innovative ideas along with modern technologies prepared some apps to provide telemedicine services, ambulance and hospitals services, on line sales services and after all on line classes from local primary and high schools to continue neo normal life. By these way, officials from local field offices provided some humanitarian services to the people for maintaining their good health and survival properly. In this step of analysis, service providers view were analyzed based on five input and output variables. During initial stage of Covid 19 situation, it was really tough to provide services from our end. Field administration took the challenges and faced successfully against covid 19.

People's access is another important variable for measuring the success. But it differs from clients point of views where they said it is less than 55% easy access facilities for service seekers. It must be kept in mind; access to government services must be easy, comfortable and friendly so that people are interested to avail services from them.

On demand service or customized service is important to make a success story. Though it is not common but it should be available to the rural people to gain their interest on public services. Success of field administration depends on people's satisfaction. Without proper satisfaction, no business can gain ultimate success.

Support from Union Parishad is also important to survive successfully. As local administration or field administration is a part of local government institutions, so their success mostly depends on the support they get from Union Parishad (UP) and its officials and representatives.

7.2.3 Change in Organizational Processes and Procedures

The Government has taken many sector-wise initiatives to combat against Covid-19 in Bangladesh. The routine working and way of delivery system in field offices changed due to severe outbreak of Covid-19 situation. Alternative way of service providing system introduced using ICT. Home office, door to door service, online sales service and Apps based business for micro entrepreneurs in root level has been introduced as new innovative services by the field administration during pandemic situation. The study revealed that 24.07% of respondents from service providers said that government has given the most focus on changing organizational processes and procedures.

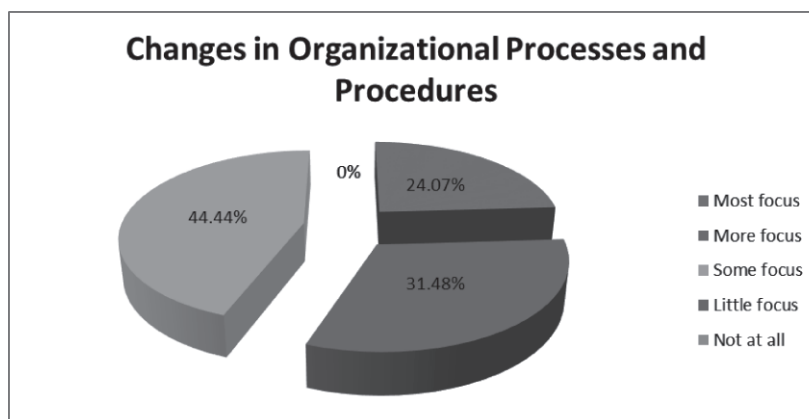


Figure 7.2.3 Change in Organizational Processes & Procedures

31.48% respondent said more focus and 44.44% said some focus was given on these variables for initiatives at the local level in Bangladesh. It is really a good sign for field offices. If it is possible to continue at this pace, it would be possible to implement organizational changes in field administration level in Bangladesh very soon.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

Covid -19 is a serious pandemic over the world which outburst in last week of December 2019 and significantly impacts all sectors. Primarily the symptom was seen in China and then largely in USA. At that time, it was a serious issue but no one knows how to prevent this disease from spreading out. It was totally a new phenomenon. People were unaware of taking corrective or preventive measures. Due to lack of awareness, many people were affected across the world. At that time field administration took various awareness programs to make people conscious about the disease. Social media, electronic media, and other tools had been used to aware people forcefully. The study mainly focuses the role of field administration during pandemic in grass root level and analysed the roles of concerned stakeholders at planning and implementing level. Field administration co-ordinated all the activities among different government agencies in field level to reduce risks, emergency response and to provide emergency services to the people in the rural areas.

Combined efforts of all government agencies (like- health, police, armed forces, social welfare, local government institutions, field administration etc) under the leadership of field administration implemented government policies taken by higher authorities, successfully to run economic activities and to save people. In addition to those, field administration in different districts in Bangladesh took different innovative ideas using modern technologies and humanitarian activities for the betterment of the people at grass root level to fight against Covid-19. The study identified several gaps in rendering services by the field offices. The life of general people may be threatened if field administration would not respond spontaneously with the pace of present trend during pandemic situation. Government should take initiative to motivate and aware people for maintaining social distances, health protocol. Media can play a vital role in this regard. Sufficient trained doctors and nurses with covid-19 dedicated hospitals in upazila levels should be set up immediately for greater coverage. Besides, good governance should be in health sector for rendering expected services to the general people.

As field administration played an important role in this regard, so they should be empowered during disaster and given more authority to work cordially with all other departments in the field level. Sufficient trained volunteers and sufficient supports from business community should be encouraged in this regard.

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