



কোভিড-১৯ লার্নিং, এভিডেন্স  
অ্যান্ড রিসার্চ প্রোগ্রাম



Covid-19 Learning, Evidence  
and Research Programme

## Research Project Summary

### The Feedback State: hearing & responding to Bangladeshi citizens during the COVID19 pandemic

#### Project lead

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#### Key personnel

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#### Expected project outcome

Increase awareness of lessons learned from COVID-19 that inform discussions on the design and implementation of COVID-19 pandemic response, with specific reference to systems for hearing and responding to citizens' concerns.

#### Setting the scene

The health, social, and economic crises sowed by COVID19 in March 2020 are ongoing and mutating: learning about what works to respond to the pandemic is particularly urgent in Bangladesh, where weak health services and a patchy social safety net has left millions vulnerable. Yet the Bangladesh state has a strong record of learning from crises, and before the pandemic, made reforms to enable citizens to participate in the governance process, including through strengthening mechanisms of feedback and response.

So, did the Bangladesh state succeed in listening and responding to its citizens' needs regarding health and social protection during the pandemic?

What did it learn from how it listens and responds to citizen feedback that will help it govern future crises?

This project asks these questions, which evidence suggests are of core relevance to understanding the governance dimensions of successful pandemic response.

## **Methodological approach**

Designed as an action-oriented research partnership uniting leading scholars of governance with prominent civil society advocates in Bangladesh, the project aims to learn from and with practitioners, policymakers and citizens, as well as advance scholarly debates about how governance shaped pandemic responses. The approach and focus of the project will be shaped by engagement with frontline actors, and will ask:

- Which mechanisms were used to gather citizens' feedback (about their health and social protection needs specifically) during the pandemic – and how successfully?
- How did central government encourage or enable local government to respond?
- What has been learned about the value of citizen feedback in crisis response?

## **Research activities**

1. Policy process tracing will assess the national level policy processes through which local governance reforms such as grievance redress mechanisms were implemented and innovations introduced to enable citizen feedback, with specific reference to health and social protection services during the pandemic.
2. A nationally representative sample survey will assess citizens' experiences with resolving health and social protection problems faced during the pandemic. Data will be collected from a gender-equal sample of 2400, across half of Bangladesh's districts.
3. Two local level case studies will involve in-depth ethnographic research in locations where local governments have been identified as successfully enabling citizen feedback and response to resolve local problems during the pandemic.
4. The project will also explore how transnational accountability mechanisms worked: citizen engagement mechanisms are required by World Bank rules. But were they deployed in the one billion US\$ worth of COVID-19 projects in Bangladesh?

## **Stakeholder engagement activities**

Government and other stakeholders will be included from the early stages of the project and continue to be engaged throughout to ensure they learn from the research.

The team will convene a series of virtual and in-person events with selected stakeholders, and produce outputs for different audiences, including:

- synthesis report
- animated slideshow
- academic journal article
- social media posts.

**Primary CLEAR theme: Service delivery, accountability and governance**

**Secondary CLEAR themes: Poverty and vulnerability, Protection of rights, Innovations**