



SCENARIO 5

Accountability Mechanisms

A respected investigative newspaper produces a damning report which shows that the Department of Social Assistance in Robo has a lot of flaws in the manner it is conducting its business. The paper based its article on official government documents and analysis. It was the conclusion of the paper that the department seemed not to be answerable to anyone.

The article in part reads “the department has shown consistent weaknesses in the frugal usage of public funds as evidenced by the upward swing of 30 percent of both misapplied and misappropriated funds over the last financial year. Of the total imprests given in the reporting period, 62% remained unretired. Procurement activities were not backed by minutes of the procurement committee.”

A sample of clients interviewed showed that they were happy with the transfer amounts given but had complaints pertaining to requests for kickbacks from the data collectors who collected beneficiary welfare data for renewals. The data collectors wield immense influence with regard as to who stays or leaves the scheme. Therefore no beneficiary wants to be in bad books with them. Some of these data collectors demanded a private payment if a beneficiary wanted his/her enrolment to be renewed. This shady practice had been going on for 5 years and despite many reports that had been made to the Department, no action had been taken against the data collectors.

The Department was operating as a closed shop and was always suspicious of any NGO that requested for information. NGOs requesting basic information such as number of beneficiaries were referred to the CEO.

This article has stirred much controversy in the country with many callers on various radio programmes asking for the blood of officers. It threatens to undermine the legitimacy of the schemes.

INSTRUCTIONS

- a) Suggest various accountability mechanisms aimed at improving the operations of the Department?
- b). How should each of the suggested mechanisms be implemented to restore trust?