

# **Mandatory Rural Services of Newly Appointed Doctors: A Health Policy Analysis**

**Course Title: Health Policy and Planning**

**Faculty: Assistant Professor Mohammad Zahirul Islam**

December 5, 2025

# Group Members

## Here we are:

- Md. Ashiqur Rahman Sarker (251075680)
- Md. Swadhin Choudhuri (2517576680)
- Md. Tarek Hasan (2517605080)

# Roadmap

- Background
- Methods and Framework
- Policy Context
- Policy Content
- Actors & Power Dynamics
- Implementation & Challenges
- Strengths, Weaknesses, Recommendations
- Conclusion

# Background

- Bangladesh faces long-standing challenges retaining doctors in rural areas.
- Mandatory rural service for new doctors introduced to ensure equitable access.
- Transfer and Posting Policy mandates two years of rural posting.
- Special considerations for female doctors and doctor couples are limited.

# Method

- Retrospective policy analysis (i.e., analysis of policy).
- Framework: Health Policy Triangle — Context, Content, Actors, Process.
- Focus on understanding implementation reality and power dynamics.

## Method (continued)

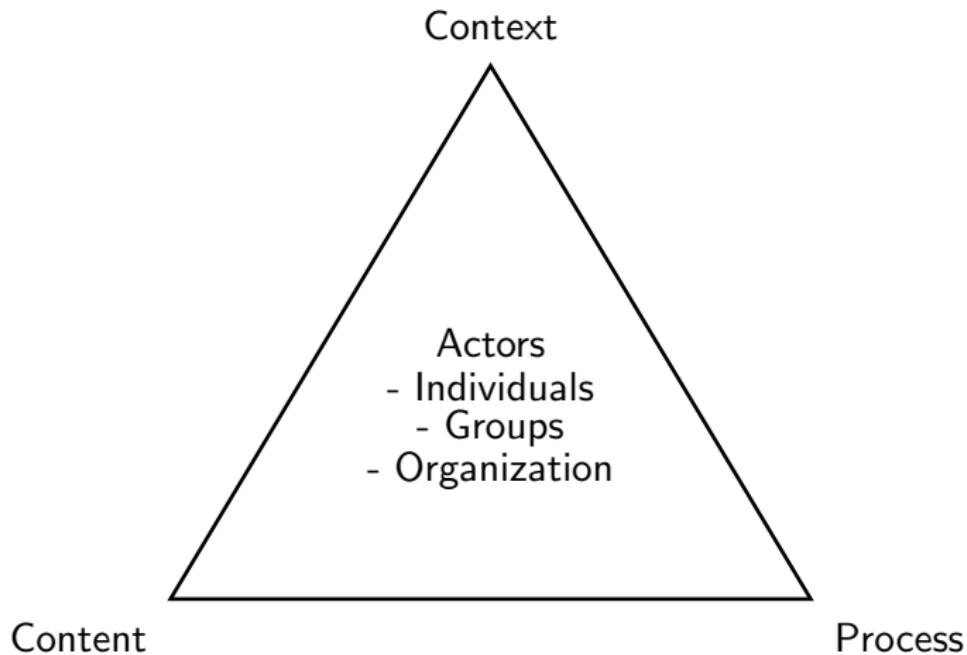


Figure: Policy Triangle Framework (Walt and Gilson, 1994)

- Bangladesh has long struggled to retain doctors in rural and hard-to-reach areas, creating severe gaps in primary health care delivery.
- Mandatory rural service for newly appointed doctors has existed since the 1980s, reflecting persistent urban–rural disparities in the health workforce.
- Strong cultural and social preferences among doctors for urban postings reduce their willingness to serve in rural locations.
- Political influence and patron–client relationships often shape postings and transfers, weakening enforcement of mandatory rural service.

## Policy Context (continued)

- The Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) holds significant political power, sometimes opposing strict implementation due to member pressure.
- Weak monitoring systems, bureaucratic interests, and informal practices (e.g., absenteeism) further undermine policy effectiveness.
- Despite challenges, rural postings remain crucial for improving equity, access, and continuity of essential health services.

- Mandatory minimum two-year rural posting for newly appointed doctors.
- Aims to distribute human resources more equitably across Bangladesh.
- Limited gender-specific provisions or safety considerations.
- Occasional special arrangements for married doctor couples.

# Actors and Their Influence

**MoHFW** Directs and oversees policy design and mandates.

**DGHS** Responsible for deployment, monitoring, and coordination.

**BMA** Strong influence; organizes pressure and negotiations.

**Politicians & Local Elites** Shape implementation through political networks.

**Doctors** Key implementers with limited individual power but significant collective interest.

# Implementation Process & Challenges

- Gap between formal posting rules and ground-level enforcement.
- Political influence allows some to avoid rural postings.
- Weak monitoring systems; absenteeism often unaddressed.
- Digital attendance initiatives face resistance.

# Policy Strengths

- Enhances service availability in underserved rural communities.
- Helps strengthen primary health care.
- Provides real-world training and experience for young doctors.
- Supports national health security by ensuring distributed manpower.

# Policy Weaknesses

- Low motivation and morale among new doctors.
- Poor working and living conditions in many rural facilities.
- Potential increase in brain drain and avoidance of public sector careers.
- Perceived unfairness due to favoritism and inconsistent enforcement.

# Recommendations

- Introduce transparent, depoliticized posting and transfer rules.
- Strengthen monitoring and accountability mechanisms.
- Provide incentives: housing, hardship allowances, promotion points.
- Implement gender-sensitive support systems.
- Reduce conflicts of interest and regulate external private practice.

# Conclusion

- Mandatory rural service improves equity and access when properly supported.
- Policy effectiveness is limited by systemic governance and operational challenges.
- Sustainable success requires both technical solutions and political reforms.

# Thank You!

Questions or Comments?

We appreciate your attention.