



GOVERNANCE IN ACTION

SHAMIM AKTER'S LEADERSHIP IN
SUSTAINABLE PLASTIC WASTE MANAGEMENT
IN COX'S BAZAR

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A VISION FOR MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP

For over two decades, Shamim Akter, Social Development Officer (SDO) of Cox's Bazar Municipality, has been a driving force of proactive governance. With unwavering dedication, she has worked at the intersection of governance and community development, ensuring that interventions by NGOs and INGOs align with the city's and its people's needs.

Among these, the PLEASE Project has stood out - not just as another initiative, but as an essential force strengthening the municipality's capacity in overall waste management. Plastic waste is currently a pressing issue in the municipal area, blocking waterways, drainage and harming the coastal environment. Recognizing this, Akter has taken a hands-on approach, ensuring that waste management is not just a municipal service but a shared community responsibility. "The PLEASE Project is a time-worthy project, and the Cox's Bazar Municipality is enhanced in terms of technical capacity by this partnership with BRAC." She emphasizes, that local ownership and sustainability must be at the core of waste management efforts.

A CHAMPION OF LOCAL OWNERSHIP

For Akter, the impact of the PLEASE Project goes beyond just an external effort. “This is not the project’s work, rather it is the municipality’s work,” she affirms. Her words reflect a fundamental shift in governance - one where collaboration between local government and development partners is not a matter of assistance but of shared responsibility.

Not just simply approving or endorsing projects, Akter is deeply involved - she regularly visits intervention areas, actively observes ongoing efforts, and provides direct feedback to the implementors to enhance their effectiveness.

She believes that waste management must be community-driven to be truly successful.





STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE THROUGH COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Beyond project coordination, Akter has embraced her role as a community leader. She does not limit her involvement to administrative oversight; she takes it upon herself to advocate for responsible waste disposal.

To make waste management more organized and community-driven, a Ward Waste Management Committee has been formed in Ward 4 (facilitated by the Please Project) where Akter is an active member. This committee plays a central role in overseeing waste collection, financial management, and community participation. Akter continues to support the committee, advocating for its scalability across Cox's Bazar Municipality. By bridging the gap between policy-level governance and grassroots implementation, she has ensured that this initiative is **not just another innovative - but also long-lasting.**

Whether addressing community meetings or speaking with residents, she urges people to use the designated communal bins for plastic waste disposal. "People need to understand that waste management is not just a service - it is a shared responsibility," she says. Her words reflect a broader shift in governance where public officials actively engage in behavioral change, making policies more than just directives on paper.

INNOVATION AND COLLABORATION: A MODEL FOR FUTURE CITIES

Akter appreciates how the PLEASE Project is not just supporting the municipality but complementing its efforts with innovative solutions. “The project is sharing the load of the municipality and innovatively managing the city’s waste,” she acknowledges. By introducing creative waste disposal mechanisms - like aesthetic communal bins as a part of the project’s nudge-based behaviour change intervention, awareness campaigns like theatre for development, and community-driven initiatives like regular community clean-up drives, the project is easing the burden on municipal services while enhancing efficacy and promoting creative solutions.

This model of collaborative governance - where local government officials like Shamim Akter take ownership of interventions sets a pivot for other municipalities in Bangladesh. It demonstrates that when development projects are integrated within local governance structures, they do not remain external interventions; they become part of the city's long-term sustainability efforts.





PAVING THE WAY FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Akter's leadership exemplifies the transformative power of local government engagement in urban development. The success of the PLEASE Project in Cox's Bazar is not just a result of its interventions but of the deep-rooted ownership embraced by municipal leaders like her. As cities across Bangladesh and beyond seek sustainable solutions to waste management, her model of proactive governance serves as an inspiring blueprint - one where projects are not just implemented but truly owned by the communities they aim to serve.

As Cox's Bazar continues its journey toward sustainable urban management, Akter's leadership will serve as a beacon of hope and inspiration - not just for her city, but for municipalities across Bangladesh and beyond. Her vision, passion, and hands-on approach are proof that when local governments take ownership, real and lasting change is possible.