Breaking the Iron Triangle of Policy Making
Empowering Marginalised Groups in Realizing Rights

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Background

- The popular uprising that toppled an authoritarian regime can be considered as an outcome of governance failure emerging from a critical lack of democratic accountability.

- The policy making process followed earlier did not usually take cognizance of mass people's voices.

- A Window of opportunity has opened up to rethink about the policy process so that the process
  - Becomes more inclusive
  - Provides opportunities for the citizens to gain access to the process
  - Ensures accountability in implementation

- Within this context, we will try to understand how the National Policy Making Process can be made more democratic

Scope and Boundary

- We specifically focus on the national policy making process and how it can reflect the voices and concerns of the marginalized population (as part of LNOB)
- Concentrate only on the Executive Organ
  - How the Ministries, Directorate or Departments design policies, strategies, rules or regulations
  - To what extent the process allows access and how
- Explore how the LNOBs currently can get access and how this can be improved
- Identify the existing accountability mechanisms available at the national level to ensure policy implementation
  - How to make these more participatory and effective

National Level Policy Process- Key Considerations

- Earlier studies argued that in Bangladesh, policies are usually made in a closed environment mostly controlled by the bureaucracy
  - A Bangladeshi version of iron triangle
- Recent studies indicate that the policy domain has slowly opened up creating an opportunity for CSOs, Experts, Think Tanks to Contribute
  - However, negative effect of shrinking civic space and politicization

Key Considerations…

- To divert resources through policies mobilization is the key
  - Overcoming collective action problem
- LNOBs are at a disadvantegous position due to limited mobilization capacity
- Relies on CSOs to mobilize
- Necessary features to effectively mobilize LNOB issues
  - Building a strong coalition for advocacy purposes (Sabatier & Weibble, 2019);
  - Findings a policy entrepreneur (Kingdon, 1984);
  - Favorable political environment (Posner et al, 2003).

Dimensions of Marginalization

- Location-based vulnerability
- Identity-oriented vulnerability
- Life-cycle based vulnerability
- Income based vulnerability

Positioning LNOB Groups

Power Image	High	Low
Positive	Advantaged	Dependent (Location, Income and Lifecycle based vulnerability)
Negative	Contender	Deviant (part of identity-oriented vulnerability

Understanding the Context

Supply Side Factors- Rules Organization Tools

Access of LNOB Groups to National Level Policy Process

Demand Side Factors- Mobilizing LNOB Support by CSO

Shift in Policy Environment- from Incrementalism to Punctuated Equilibrium
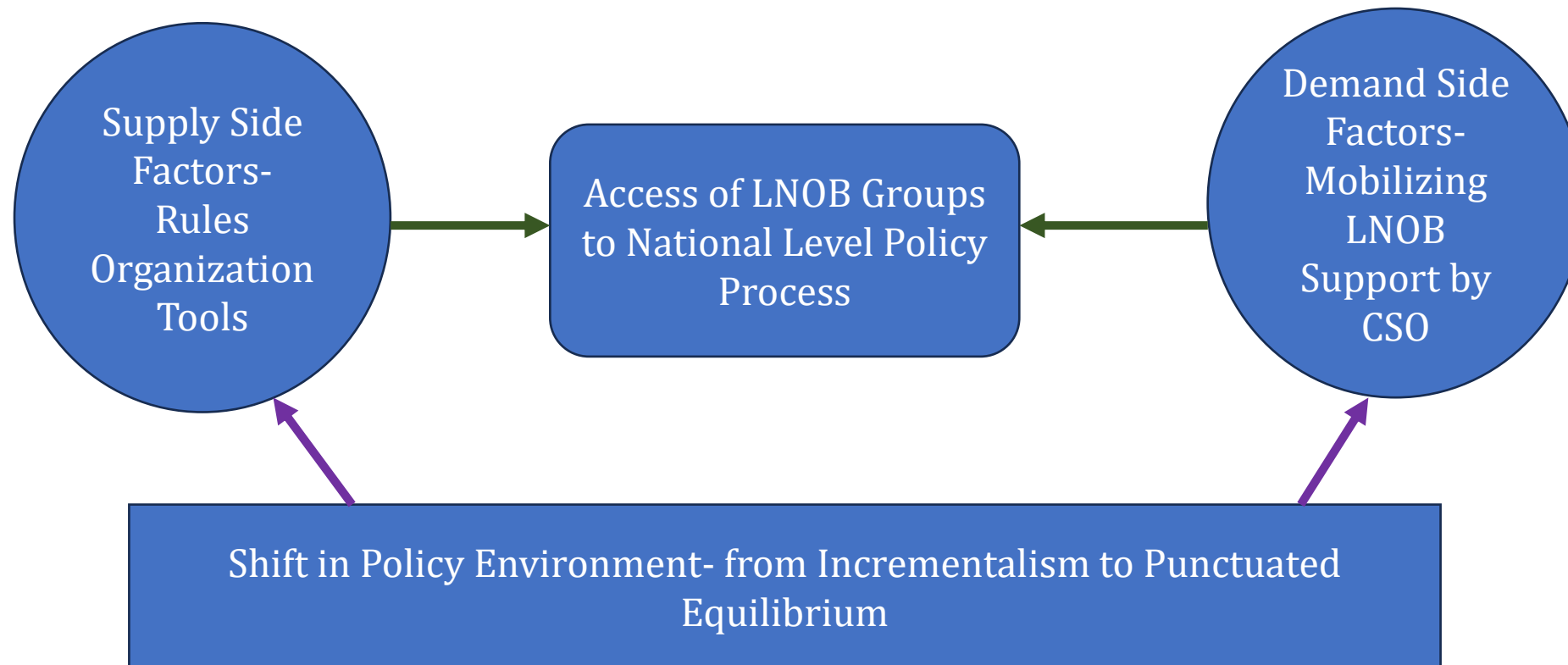
Research Questions

- Key Question-
  - Within the current evolving context, what measures can be done to ensure that the LNOB groups effectively participate in the policy process?
  - What can be done to empower these groups so that they can ensure effective policy Implementation?

Supply Side Issues

- What are the existing channels that provide access to the marginalized groups (and LNOB community) in the policy process? What are the challenges and limitations?

- What types of mechanisms are available within the executive organ of the state that ensures government's accountability in case of policy implementation?

- How can we make the existing channels more accessible?

- What other channels/ options can be considered?

Demand Side Issues

- How can we mobilize the marginalized groups so that they can effectively bargain for policy benefits?

- How can the CSOs/ NGOs facilitate this mobilization?

- What are the existing challenges that the CSOs face while bargaining in favor of the LNOB?

- How can we build the capacity of CSOs?

- How can the CSOs/ NGOs support the LNOB groups in ensuring accountability?

Methodology

- Document Review and Content Analysis
  - Review of existing laws, rules and regulations that faciliate participation
- Literature Review to explore policy process theories and examine their apllicability in the context of Bangladesh
- Expert Group Meeting

Existing Channels to Provide Access-Supply Side

- Seeking opinion/ comments from citizens
  - Section 31A of Rules of Business
- Stakeholder Consultation
  - Secretariat Instructions/ Manuals
- Grievance Redress Mechanism
  - Grievance Redress System Policy
  - Appoinment of Grievance Redress Officer
  - Grievance Redress Cell

Exsiting Mechanism- Demand Side

- Participation by the LNOB Communities
  - Through using the existing channels
  - Through mobilization
- Support provided through CSOs/ Rights-based Organizations
  - Lobbying on behalf of LNOBs
  - Blocking
  - Strategical Actions
    - Coalition Building
    - Narrative design to counter backlash
    - Amplifying Marginalized Voice
    - Negotiation

Challenges/ Limitations- Why the Existing Mechanisms Do Not Work

- Supply Side
  - Reactive rather than proactive- no effort to facilitate or amplify marginalized voices
  - Representative voices are not selected
  - Information has not been disseminated properly
  - Digital Divide
 - Legal barriers for the CSOs

Demand Side

- Concerns about representation
  - Concerns are there whether the CSOs really reflect or represent the LNOBs
  - Local level LNOB groups/ organizations do not get access to policy process
- Problems in coalition building
- Technical Capacity
- Collective Action Problem
  - LNOB groups often fail to deal with resource issues and thus do not succed in overcoming collective action problem
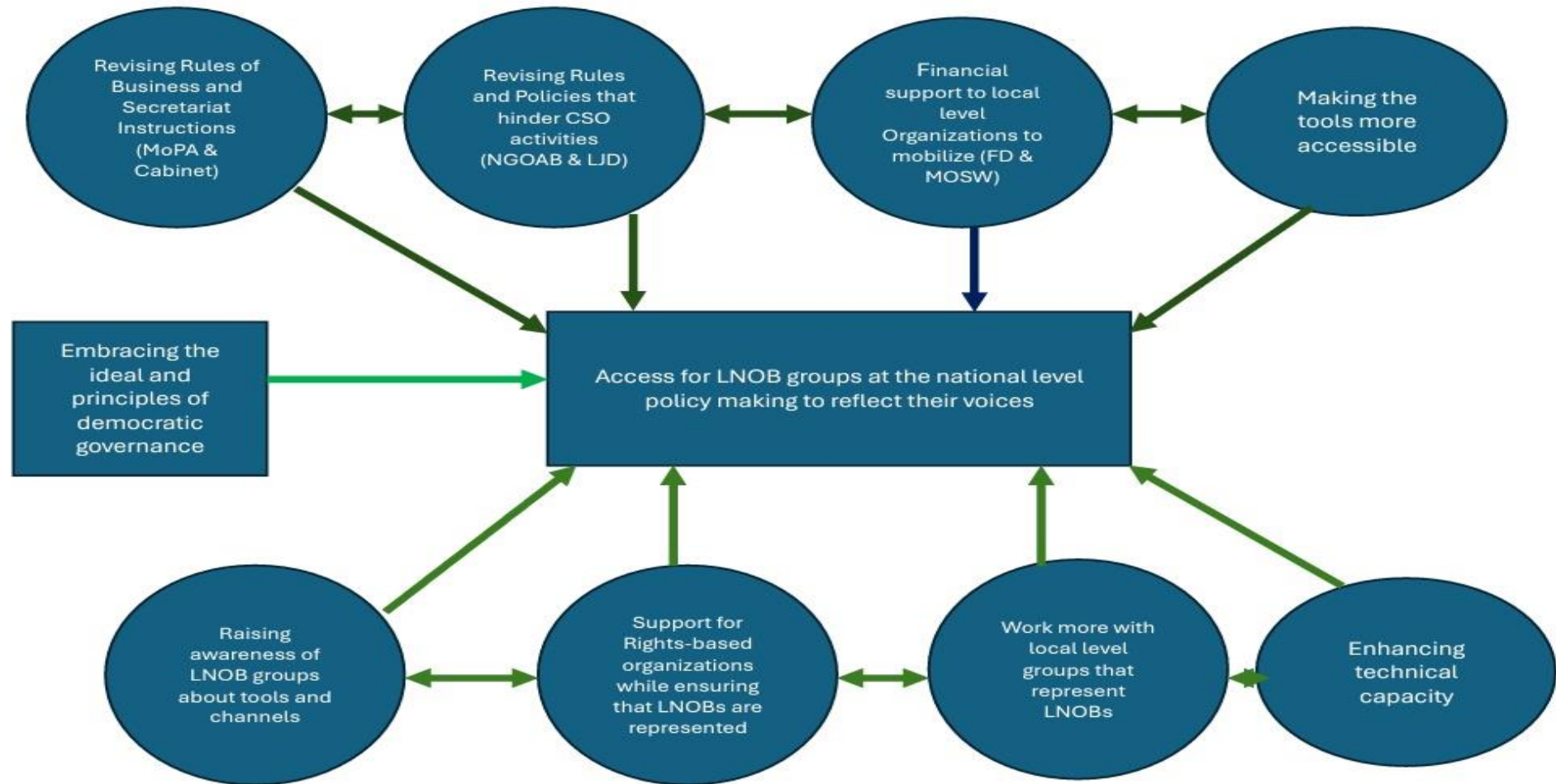
Understanding the Challenges
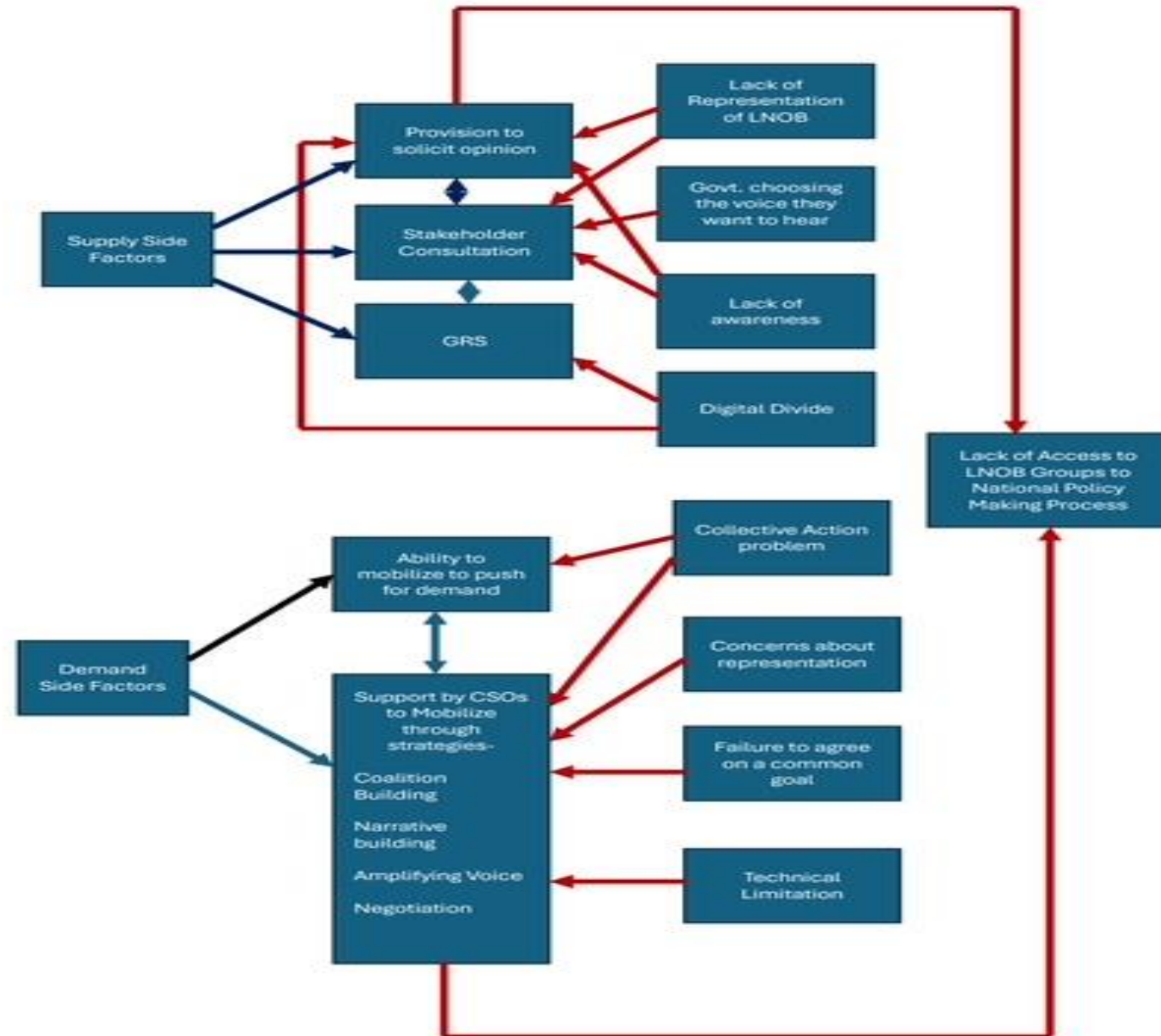
Possible Solutions

Solutions...Operationalization

- Embracing the principles of democratic governance
  - Transparency in policy making
  - Making the bureaucracy accountable and responsive
- Revise the existing rules and policies
  - Ensuring participation at the national level policy making
- Strengthening Stakeholder Consultation
- Facilitate the growth of local organizations/ voices that would represent the LNOB groups and create opportunities for national level participation

Possible Solutions

- Create an enabling environment for the CSOs so that they can-
    - Mobilize resources
    - Amplify marginalized voices
    - Ensure representation of LNOB groups within their broader coalition
    - Build coalition
- Enhance technical capacity for negotiation and bargaining

Thank You

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