

Minimize Corruption and Maximize Citizen Engagement in Public Services Delivery YOUTH FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, BERHAMPUR, ODISHA, INDIA

With the achievements of results in phase-II of the anti-corruption project, phase-III started with an aim to minimize corruption and maximize citizen engagement in three public programme i.e. Public Distribution System (PDS), Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) and Drinking Water services in Berhampur city of Odisha, India. This phase started with the lessons learned and experiences gained in the past two projects with community engagement to fight corruption. Most of the activities were carried out with more strategic and robust manner.

The Problem

It has been reported that as many as 62%¹ of all citizens think that corruption is real and have had firsthand experiences of paying bribe or “using a contact” to get a job done in a public office. Eighty-two percent (82%²) of the citizens were required to pay bribes to obtain basic public services. The overall bribery index³ remains at 36.52 out of a maximum score of 100. It is estimated that the common citizens pay a bribe of 1.28 million US\$ per annum. During 2011 there is slight reduction of 28% in bribery/ corruption as per the urban corruption end line survey. It has been found there is large scale corruption, misappropriation and poor service delivery in public distribution system (PDS), integrated child development scheme (ICDS) and drinking water. The communities in the target fields were demanded to work in these three sectors which they come across in their day to day life and which has a direct impact on their livelihood and food security. Most of corruption issues addressed are irregular opening of fair price shops and ICDS centre, variation in quantity and poor quality of food items, lack of information dissemination, lack of attendance of staff in fair price shops and AWCs, poor transparency and lack of accountability are very serious and acute. Similarly in drinking water service delivery there is low level of access, irregular and insufficient supply of water and poor quality of water supply, lack of information and poor accountability of the service providers were severe.

Key stakeholders

- a. Engagement of Citizen Monitoring Committee and Coalition Against Corruption harnessed the actions of citizen and civil society organizations in minimising corruption and enhancing public service delivery in Berhampur.
- b. Citizen Monitors and Community Group Members were organized to proactively respond to issues on public service delivery, monitored service delivery with knowledge on their entitlements and procedures for public service delivery.
- c. Government officials⁴ (senior, mid level, frontline staff), PDS shop owners and elected representatives participated in the project activities and responded to many issues raised during interactions with communities, citizen monitors and other stakeholders.

Action taken

- Formation of citizen monitoring committees and empower them to fight against corruption through legal tools like grievance process, RTI, social auditing, public hearing, and advocacy
- Design of set of standard inventory for citizen monitoring/social auditing and train the citizen monitors on its use
- Constructive engagement with public officials of PDS, ICDS and water supply and the elected representatives to improve transparency, accountability and service delivery.
- Advocate for improved service delivery and reduce corruption through the Coalition Against Corruption
- Citizen friendly Hotline to help people report corruption, use of RTI and other entitlements PDS, ICSD and drinking water
- Publication of hand book and IEC materials on citizens monitoring (PDS, ICSD and drinking water) and RTI

¹ India corruption Study, 2005 (TII)

² Urban Corruption Survey, 2008 (YSD)

³ Bribery index is an aggregate of four indicators: incidence, prevalence, severity and favoritism are percentages in the sample. The other three, frequency, cost and size of bribes, which are actual values, are scaled by the highest value to obtain an index where the highest value equals 100.

⁴ PHED, BMC, CSO, CDPO, WCDD

- **Community engagement:** engage of communities and citizens to monitor service delivery and fight corruption. Provision of training on tools (RTI), techniques of monitoring (Social Auditing) and advocate for transparency, accountability and improve service delivery.
- **Civil society networking:** networking with the other NGO's, intellectuals and media specifically with city level network (CAC) and district level network. Sharing best practices, knowledge and provide them training to advocate and continue engage with service providers also important method.
- **Constructive engagement with service agencies:** productive engagement with public officials, elected representative to share service delivery gaps and improve service delivery. Finding champions and promote them to improve transparency, accountability by providing them technical support, engagement with beneficiaries and other stakeholders are among others.
- **Peer learning and knowledge sharing:** sharing and disseminating of knowledge and cases to the peer groups is one of the important methods.

Tools

- **Right to Information:** The Right to Information Act, 2005 which assures/guarantees citizens right to access publicly held information
- **Social Audit:** A social audit is used to monitor the performance of public sector institutions. As its name might imply, a social audit collects information on resources, analyzes it, and shares it publicly
- **Public Hearing:** Public hearings are formal meetings at the community level where local officials and citizens have the opportunity to exchange information and opinions on community affairs
- **Citizen Report Card:** CRCs are a tool to engage citizens in assessing the delivery of priority public services which can be used as an overall assessment of a public agency or to measure client satisfaction with specific services or issues, such as access, availability, quality, reliability, responsiveness or transparency of the service provider
- **People centered and media advocacy:** People Centred Advocacy is an advocacy method for the empowerment of people and the realisation of their rights. In this project both the advocacy tools were trained to the citizen monitors to advocate for transparent and improved service delivery

Results and Impact

- 1404 no in 10 wards (206 in 13 slums) of eligible excluded beneficiaries got poor left out (PLO) ration cards and all ration card holders of the 13 slums have the stipulated quantities of ration items regularly on stipulated price
- All the ration shops operating in the 13 slums are open at the accepted times (two times in a day)
- People in 13 slums are oriented and empowered through training workshops.
- All grievances (31) and RTI applications (67) (as per identified numbers) filed by Community on PDS
- Strong district level network of CSOs/CBOs established (CAC at the city level) to address PDS related issues
- All the government and ration shop owners (22 in 13 wards and 59 in 10 wards) share all related information on PDS with the community, respond to the genuine demands, follow the stipulated rules and procedures
- All the relevant cases of PDS documented and shared with wider audience in 13 slums
- Community participates actively in the whole management of the ICDS in 10 slums and receive stipulated nutritional food and services in time under ICDS in 10 slums
- 78.4% of households getting safe drinking water regularly and sufficiently in 13 slums

Challenges

- **Community mobilization:** Community mobilization in anti-corruption project where results are delayed, sometimes invisible and difficult to measure, were quite challenging and on the other hand fear psychosis of losing services and not getting support from government officials and elected representative is very difficult for the team to mobilize communities in large scale.
- **Engage with public officials:** Engaging public officials specifically the senior officials who can make decisions and frontline staff getting benefitted due to corruption, both are difficult to mobilize them and engage with them.

- **Handling political elite:** Political elites at the community level are most obstacles and challenging in the project implementation.
- **Working with shop owners:** Shop owners of PDS and AWWs of ICDS services are very defensive due to many issues they are facing in day to day provision of services. They at a point of time didn't cooperate with the team.
- **Threat from elites:** There are many threats to our staff and community monitors not to engage anti-corruption initiative and even not to enter few slums and AWCs, PDS shops.

Lessons Learned

- Engaged community groups in monitoring service delivery and fighting corruption are commendable and exceptional.
- Engaged senior public officials and brought information disclosed and transparency in service delivery
- Involved elected representatives in demanding transparency and improve service delivery with communities.
- Knowledge achieved on right to information, social auditing and advocacy doubled the confidence of the citizens and a new hope created to get improved and corruption free services.
- Capably brought and influenced public officials and elected representatives to act in a transparent manner and improve service delivery.
- Most of the eligible excluded families served with a ration card and included in the list of AWC
- All the beneficiaries access to services as per the norms, on time and quality food items and other services.
- Information disclosed by the service delivery agencies helped monitoring service delivery and fight against corruption

Knowledge Products

- **Training Module:** The training module in which the training of different stakeholders including service providers, officials and communities are efficient to train and make use of the tools to bring transparency and accountability in service delivery.
- **Social Audit Tools:** The social accountability tools that are developed, piloted and used during the project period has tremendous power to monitor service delivery, it is use friendly and accepted by both the communities and service providers.
- **IEC Materials:** IEC materials developed during the project period are user friendly by the communities, service providers and CSOs. This has been designed user friendly mostly for the communities who actually need this. Most of the materials contain the details of the programme, entitlements, process and grievance.