

CARTA

Citizen Action for Results,
Transparency, and Accountability



Local Government Support Project (LGSP II)

PROJECT DETAILS

PARTNERS

Partnership for Transparency Fund
Manusher Jonno Foundation
Democracy Watch (DW)
Agrogoti Sanghsta (AG)

TOTAL COST

US\$ 149,948 (DW)
US\$ 74,968 (AG)

DURATION

September 2012 – August 2014

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

DW: 30 UPs (Jessore and Nilphamari districts)
AG: 30 UPs (Satkhira district)

SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY TOOLS

Social audit, public hearings

CONTEXT

LGSP-II is a national decentralization project that aims to strengthen local governance. LGSP II provides grants to Union Parishads (UPs) - the oldest and local government system in Bangladesh – so the UP community can determine which public projects serve best their community. The main purpose of the project is to build the capacity of local governments to manage public services and resources. The project structure uses a block-grant methodology – from the central government to the UP. Since December 2011, LGSP II has disbursed 13,300 million taka to 4,500 UPs. These direct block grants have introduced changes in the local government practices, especially in fiscal transfer, transparency, community participation and accountability.

Two main committees are responsible for the management process. The Ward Committee (WC) is responsible for the planning, procurement and implementation of the public projects while the Scheme Supervision Committee (SSC) acts as the local monitoring agency.

The local government faces governance challenges:

- Lack of experience and skills developed for community engagement in budgetary processes at the UP level
- Limited experience in active disclosure of information
- Low community demand for budget transparency

- Poor citizen feedback mechanisms to measure citizen satisfaction with local governance and service delivery

Some gaps that were revealed through TPM were already known to the implementing agency. For example, it was known that WC and SSC members were mostly inexperienced and lacked knowledge of LGSP as well as the capacity to realize its intended benefits. Also, the WC formation process was not participatory as directed by the UP's operation manual.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The sub-project goal was to promote citizen engagement and responsiveness from local government by ensuring accountability and transparency of UPs. The specific objectives were to:

- Mobilize and capacitate civil society and UP representatives to conduct open budgeting process, as per LGSP-II procedures and the UP operations manual, through the use of social audit and public hearing tools.
- Strengthen capacities of civil society and communities to monitor budget transparency, efficiency, participation, inclusion and accountability at the local level.

The CARTA sub-project was mainly a TPM project at the UP level, which employed social audit tools. The main capacity building component consisted in forming and training citizen group (CGs) committees, who were charged with monitoring the LGSP-II block grant process by reviewing WC and SSC performance. The two implementing CSOs – Democracy Watch (DW) and Agragoti Sangtha (AG) – employed the same methodology in different geographic areas.

RESULTS

The surveys assessed the local budgeting process in terms of transparency, accountability, efficiency, inclusion and participation from the perspective of the local stakeholders and communities. The baseline survey revealed number of governance gaps some of which were already known by the implementing agency.

The overall results of the second survey were positive:

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The objective of Citizen Action for Results, Transparency and Accountability (CARTA) is to enhance the development impact, sustainability and ownership of pro-poor projects in Bangladesh and Nepal financed by the World Bank (WB), by promoting civil society organization engagement and experience and capacity to demand better governance. The program was funded by US\$1.9 million grant from the Japanese Social Development Fund (JSDF) and administered by the WB.

- 100% of UP committee and community members had knowledge of the LGSP-II scheme compared to 80% (AG) and 58% (DW) at the beginning of the sub-project.
- 100% of UPs properly disseminated information through notice boards, compared to 70% (AG) and 78% (DW) at the sub-project outset
- Information boards were displayed for 80% (AG) and 78% (DW) of the schemes.
- The tax collection improved from 77% to 83% (AG) and from 35% to 43% (DW) compliance level.

The primary activity that contributed to better performance of the UPs was the CG's support to the LGSP II committees.

IMPACT

Although the sub-project only lasted 2 years, it successfully increased citizen engagement and local government responsiveness. For example, LGSP-II officials organized a training for WCs and SSCs after the baseline survey revealed their limited knowledge of their roles. In addition, UP officials began to work closely with CGs because the latter were capacitated to support the UP functions. Given the positive results of this pilot project, it is likely that the stakeholders will choose to pursue similar strategies to fulfill the community needs and the development goals. For this, partnership with local CSOs can be an important success factor.