



## **Empowering Women in Urban Slums to Fight Corruption in Service Delivery in Bangalore, India**

<b>CSO:</b>	Centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR)
<b>Years:</b>	2009 – 2010
<b>Country:</b>	Karnataka State, India
<b>Amount:</b>	\$13,850 USD
<b>Sector:</b>	Controlling Corruption in Delivery of Social Services: Social Safety Net

<b>Corruption Problem:</b>	Widespread corruption in the delivery of safety net programs
<b>Tools employed:</b>	Capacity Building, Citizen Monitoring, Coalition Building, Community Mobilization, RTI, Survey, Advocacy, Social Audit

Corruption in a variety of government administered safety net programs has prompted the Centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR), an Indian Public Charitable Trust, headquartered in Delhi, to take action. CFAR is working on a range of issues such as advocating for the rights of the urban poor, strengthening implementation of the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act, and HIV/AIDS. CFAR is active in 37 slum settlements across 7 cities of Delhi, Jaipur, Pune, Kolkata, Bhubaneswar and Bangalore. A key intervention of CFAR in Karnataka, is 'Monitoring of Government Food Schemes and Schemes for Vulnerable Women through Community Participation and Action to Create Transparent Governance', supported by PTF. The project aims at empowering women to advocate for corruption-free service delivery, giving power to communities to hold the government accountable in five slums in Bangalore City.

### **Corruption Problem Addressed**

Corruption is pervasive in India’s welfare and social safety net programs and has deprived citizens, especially the poor and most vulnerable, of their rights and entitlements frequently and across the country. Building on its prior work with communities in four slum settlements in Bangalore

City, CFAR held group discussions with community member to identify roots, effects and symptoms of corruption targeting the Public Distribution Scheme (PDS) and the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme.

During the deliberations, one of the participants concluded, *“We do not even know when the shopkeeper opens his shop [Fair Price Shop (FPS) – mandated to distribute food entitlements to eligible families under the PDS scheme]. Moreover the quality of food grains that we get is not good at all. We have filed complaints several times but to date have not received any response.”* This sentiment was echoed by other citizens, *“When we ask the personnel why such a small quantity is being given, she says this is what the government has allotted.”*

CFAR confirmed these observations conducting a pilot baseline survey. Out of a sample size of 302 households, only 135 respondents had a ration card. The analysis of the 135 card holders revealed that 127 were BPL (Below Poverty Line) card holders, however only 63 card holders were distributed rations. Further research revealed a number of malpractices in the distribution of rations and improper functioning of ration shops and the non-functioning of vigilance committees.

Similarly, and with respect to the ICDS program, the survey showed that although there were 60 children that had been enlisted with the Department of Women and Child Development, there was no actual *Anganwadi* center for children to visit. Furthermore, the existent ICDS centers served the improper quality and quantity of food to children. Development committees were not functioning and there was a lack of basic amenities at the Centers.

## Actions Taken by CFAR

The first phase of the project focused on the identification and prioritization of corruption problems to be tackled. This effort included strengthening and scaling up women-led forums across 5 slum settlements in Bangalore. CFAR concentrated on establishing and strengthening women-led community collectives. These women’s collectives consist of members who have decided to come together under a common banner, *Daksha Samuha*, to claim their rights and entitlements. After being trained in filing RTI applications, the women were divided into two groups: Community Advocates who actively participate and initiate action, and Community Volunteers, who converge during large scale events, such as public hearings, consultations, demonstrations, etc.

Thanks to the reputation CFAR has built over the years, and though informal in nature, these women’s forums have become a sought space for the community to seek justice and address grievances. Some of the forum members also participate in government-mandated grass-roots bodies, such as *Anganwadi* Development Committees under the ICDS scheme and in vigilance committees under the PDS.

CFAR focused on capacity building and community empowerment and established a variety of advocacy tools through which the communities’ voices could be heard and government authorities targeted: The RTI-trained community advocates filed petitions, held public hearings, requested and conducted social audits, advocated with government agencies, and networked with other campaigns and movements. Emphasis was placed on evidence-based advocacy using visual documentation and case studies to show the horrific and often times appalling state of public service delivery.



Sample of an RTI application

Over the course of the project, three public hearings were held on issues affecting basic amenities in the ICDS, and four consultations (two on the Food Security Act, one with FPS owners, and a fourth to declare and publicize two model ration shops). For the consultation with FPS owners, the ground work was laid through establishing a relationship with the Karnataka Food and Civil Supplies (KFCS) officials, and the President of FPS owners’ association.

## Impact and Results Achieved

Results of the first phase include:

- ✓ 47 RTI applications submitted.
- ✓ 28 trained members of the *Daksha Samuha* (community group), including in-depth

knowledge on the usage of the RTI Act, entitlements under various ration card formats, and social benefits.

- ✓ Training on conducting negotiations with the government and other stakeholder, including engaging with the media.
- ✓ Filing of new applications for BPL ration cards for approximately 1,000 people (out of 1,030 who did not have ration cards) which resulted in 371 newly issued BPL cards.
- ✓ Three public hearings covering 550 people or 67% of the 820 households on issues of basic amenities, PDS and Right to Housing.



CFAR facilitated conducting five public hearings

- ✓ Based on the complaints filed by the *Daksha Samuha*, the KFCs took back twice inedible grain allotted to FPS shops. Furthermore, one ration shop was seized.
- ✓ Following a public hearing, two new bore wells and two additional water tanks were installed to ensure proper water supply for the 242 residents. Additionally, all households were given an electricity connection, the main road was paved and proper drainage lines were laid. A sweeper was assigned to clean the area three times a week.

Based on the feedback received from the community, corruption in the area appears to be declining. Some 362 BPL cards were issued without any bribes being paid. Similarly, other beneficiaries, such as widows (275), senior citizens (170) and disabled persons (7) are receiving pensions, and 400 senior citizens now avail of the mid-day meals without paying bribes.

More significantly, a culture of fighting corruption has been created amongst the forum members and is not limited to PDS and ICDS. The *Daksha Samuha* now works with government maternity hospitals. The women trained by CFAR no longer depend on the CSO, but show the courage to fight independently and organize the community to achieve additional results.

## Documentation

Project completion reports (PCRs) and Project completion assessments (PCAs) of the EBJFI-implemented project can be accessed at [www.ptfund.org](http://www.ptfund.org) under the “Where-we-work” tab.

The CFAR website can be accessed at: [www.cfar.org.in](http://www.cfar.org.in)

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