

CARTA

Citizen Action for Results,
Transparency, and Accountability



Rural Electrification and Renewable Energy Development (RERED II)

PROJECT DETAILS

PARTNERS

Partnership for Transparency Fund
Manusher Jonno Foundation
Population Services and Training
Center (PSTC)

TOTAL COST

US\$ 146,065

DURATION

2 years

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

14 unions → 7 upazilas → 7 districts

SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY TOOLS

Focus discussion groups (FGD), key informant interview (KII)

CONTEXT

The Rural Electrification and Renewable Energy Development (RERED II) Project aims to increase access to electricity through Solar Home System (SHS) in rural areas of Bangladesh. The Infrastructure Development Company Limited (IDCOL) started the SHS program to supplement the Government's vision of ensuring "Access to Electricity for All" by 2021. The SHS program aims to ensure access to clean electricity for the energy-starved, off-grid rural areas of Bangladesh.

Although the program has been recognized as one of the largest and fastest growing off-grid renewable energy programs in the world, policy and operational challenges remain common. The primary purpose of CARTA sub-project is to build capacity of local citizens to demand better service delivery of public funded projects. IDCOL implements the SHS program by granting exclusive concessions to private companies, also referred as Partner Organizations (POs). In the overall scheme of things, IDCOL provides grants and soft loans to POs to reduce SHS cost, build capacity, and provide technical assistance (training, logistics and promotional support). IDCOL monitors the implementation of the program. However, the POs were found to have prioritized

market expansion over customer satisfaction and IDCOL was seeking to address these issues.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

CARTA contracted the Population Services Training Center (PSTC) to assess and help improve service delivery by strengthening citizen engagement in RERED. The sub-project was designed to carry out independent third-party monitoring (TPM) and to provide capacity building for user groups. The RERED sub-project was implemented over two years, starting on September 2012. The sub-project objectives were to:

- Make SHS users become more knowledgeable to participate with POs and ensure accountability.
- Enable SHS users to provide systematic feedback throughout the project implementation process.
- Provide suggestions for improving the service delivery of the SHS program.

The sub-project used repeater surveys among users, as well as such techniques as focus group discussion (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) – to gather data. To enhance the knowledge and capacity of users, PSTC formed 14 union level user groups who were trained in the operation and maintenance of SHS.

RESULTS

The TPM report compared data from the baseline and end-line surveys and offered recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the service delivery. In addition, the surveys provided direct feedback from service users to service providers (POs). The sub-project in cooperation with POs provided training for 350 first time users on SHS equipment maintenance. The key survey results included:

- Percentage of households experiencing problems with their SHS unit decreased from 28% to 5% and from 16% to 1% for business users.
- The percentage of users briefed by a technician before or during the installation of their SHS and

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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.

increased from 46% to 68% for household users and from 57% to 70% for business users.

- The time taken by POs to solve problems related to SHS equipment decreased from “31-60” days to “1-15” days.

IMPACT

IDCOL has long recognized the significance of training SHS users - as demonstrated by a RERED project provision for SHS buyer training. However, the baseline survey revealed that POs were not allocating enough resources for user training. During the implementation of the CARTA sub-project the number of users experiencing problems with their SHS unit decreased and the POs realized the positive results of providing early training. As a result, additional trainings have been organized for equipment maintenance. The sub-project demonstrated the benefits of proper equipment maintenance training to the life of SHS units and sustainability of the program. Both IDCOL and the POs have indicated their intention to continue with training activities since it was found that not only is it cost effective to train users of SHS, but these users are the primary source of SHS knowledge and reviews for potential new clients in rural areas.