



Campaigning for Transparency at Local Governments in Mongolia

CSO:	Globe International (GI)
Years:	2010-2011
Country:	Ovorkhangai Aimag and Khentii Aimag, Mongolia
Amount:	\$30,000 USD
Sector:	Right to Information

Corruption Problem:	Non-Disclosure of Information and the Absence of a Freedom-of Information Law
Tools employed:	Awareness Raising, Information Campaign, Citizen Monitoring, Advocacy, Media Campaign, Constructive Engagement,

The notorious application of secrecy laws and a deeply engrained culture of not disclosing even basic information to the public has prompted Globe International (GI), a local Mongolian CSO, to pilot a program that empowers citizens to demand greater responsiveness from officials and local governments in two aimags (provinces) in Mongolia. The conviction that informed and empowered citizens can act as powerful change agents – able to demand accountability – was the main driver of GI’s 12-month project “Transparency Campaigning at Local Government to Curb Corruption”. At the policy level the project lobbied for the approval of the Freedom of Information law then pending in Parliament. The project achieved both, greater awareness and empowerment at the local level and contributed to passing the law at the national level.

Corruption Problem Addressed

There are two widespread manifestations of corruption in Mongolia. There is grand corruption which is financed by trade and through investors and involves politicians and senior officials. And there is petty corruption that involves officials who exploit the very citizens they should be serving. The two feed each other. Access to information held by public institutions is one of the essential

ingredients to make public organizations more transparent, to empower the public to demand actions, and thus forms an important tool in combating corruption. The absence of freedom of information and the use of secrecy laws to restrict access to information allows bureaucrats to deny citizens and media access to thousands of documents and other information. While this procedure is claimed to be justified for various reasons, it often covers up corruption and bribery that flourishes in many parts of the government.

Actions were directed at tackling the following problems: Lack of awareness of local citizens and local officials of the public’s right to know; Lack of access to information held by local public organizations; Lack of participation of local citizens and a lack of necessary skills to take action toward exerting stronger control on possible instances of corruption in the public sector.

Actions Taken by GI

GI has been advocating and lobbying for government transparency and freedom of information legislation in the past and has used a variety of methods to do so. In this particular project, GI based its actions on an existent legal framework, namely resolution No. 143 of 2009 that

prescribes government agencies to report on key transparency indicators. Working with grassroots organizations in small communities, GI aimed to ensure the implementation of said resolution. The project piloted implementation in the two soums (counties) of Bayankhutag (Khentii aimag) and Guchin Us (Ovorkhangai aimag) with the goal to improve transparency of local public organizations.

Key players of the project were local citizens, soum governors' offices, and aimag-based NGOs. The project actions and outputs included the following:

Awareness Raising & Training

- 93 citizens, including herders and public officials made aware of the public's right to access information through workshops, held by local public organizations;
- 500 citizens and public officials made aware of their right to access public information through the audio handbook "Your Right to Know";
- More than 90,000 people obtained information on their right to access public information and types of corruption through audio and video broadcasting aired by eight local broadcast stations in eight aimags.



Members of the Monitoring Team

Facilitating Community Action

- 12 local citizens, selected by the community, acquired monitoring skills and conducted

monitoring and an assessment of eight public agencies;

- 120 citizens, for the first time, were able to assess the corruption situation in their communities through corruption perception surveys conducted by two NGOs with participation of four trainees from the local community;
- Results of the monitoring and perception survey was presented to and received by the Independent Authority against Corruption (IAAC), the soum governors' offices, the Citizens' Representative Khurals (local assembly) and public agencies.



Information display as agreed upon between citizens and local governments

Local Government Action

- High level local government officials (including a soum governor, vice governors and the head of a Citizen's Representative Khural) joined the training that also developed a check list of information to be made accessible to the public, including the identification of proper distribution channels to use;
- Two soum governors joined the round table presentation of results and accepted the recommendations;
- Two governors signed orders to promote transparency actions, which included the installation of four information boards in two soums and the creation of two websites.



Media Action

- Media representatives joined in the round table discussion and significant media coverage was launched in print, radio and television media. The media also covered to major events.
- Media outlets included the local media: Dolgoon Kherlen radio; regional media: Noyon-Ull regional radio and Khentii TV; and national media: Mongolian National Broadcaster (MNB), Eagle TV, NTV, and television channel TV9. The audio handbooks were also aired by GI's eight 8 partners in local broadcasting stations.

Impact and Results Achieved

The most significant outcome is that local governments have become more transparent, and that the delivery of public services has improved significantly due to increased access to information and public participation. A post-project evaluation survey showed that 61 percent of the respondents agreed that transparency at soum level had improved. In addition, 68% reported that their knowledge about corruption had improved. Arrogant attitudes of local public officials improved as citizens were empowered with new knowledge and skills to monitor and report on local government actions.

The project has been particularly useful to herders who can now access information on local government services while on the move and, if need be, file complaints about non-delivery of these services via the internet and SMS text messages. The increased use of mobile technology allows governors of baghs (smallest administration unit) and soums to travel around with laptops showing websites and offering herders the possibility to post their comments and opinions online and has increased participation. These results have empowered both local officials and

citizens. While the use of technology is limited by the availability of computers and internet capacity in the soums, there is a reasonable expectation of improvement over time.

GI's president, who is a member of the committee drafting the Freedom of Information (FOI) bill, was able to use project monitoring results to lobby the State Great Khural (Parliament) to pass the proposed law during a public hearing in Parliament. The FOI bill was successfully adopted in June 2011.

The final measure of impact in this type of project is sustainability. So far this is assured at the local level as the local governments have assumed responsibility for continuing the campaign, and the aimag governors of Ovorkhangai and Khentii have started to replicate the experience in other soums within the two targeted provinces. The next challenge is to have the IACC scale the model up nationwide, making necessary changes due to the now adopted FOI bill.

The project serves as a masterful example on how citizen empowerment at the local level, careful recording of results and an integrated plan to lobby for systemic changes can affect the overall ability of a country to tackle the problem of corruption.

Documentation

Project completion reports and project completion assessments can be accessed at the PTF website www.ptfund.org under the "Where-we-work" section.

A progress report can be accessed at <http://www.globeinter.org.mn/images/upld/Progressreport2May52011.pdf>

Monitoring reports can be accessed at <http://www.globeinter.org.mn/?cmd=Record&id=872&menuid=370> (Bayankhutag)
<http://www.globeinter.org.mn/?cmd=Record&id=868&menuid=370> (Guchin-U)



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Reports on the corruption perception surveys can be accessed at

<http://www.globeinter.org.mn/images/upld/SurveyoncorruptionreportKhentii.pdf> (Bayankhutag)

<http://www.globeinter.org.mn/images/upld/SurveyreportUvurkhangaiaimag.pdf> (Guchin-U)

More information on GI's work regarding FOI can be found at

<http://globeinter.org.mn/old/en/emech/index.php>

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