

Independent Completion Assessment Report: Citizens Against Corruption Programme

Adhar, Orissa

Prepared By:



A Global Initiative on Citizenship and Democracy

<i>Title of Project</i>	To reduce opportunities for corruption in the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) and Public Distribution System (PDS) in Loisingha block, Orissa through a citizen's campaign'.
<i>Project Location:</i> Loisingha block, Bolangir, Orissa	
Corruption Problem being addressed: (as described in the project proposal)	
<p>ADHAR is focusing on Bolangir district and largely to the KBK (Kalahandi-Bolangir-Koraput) region of Orissa since last 16 year. Bolangir, one of the 100 most poorest districts of India is known for its persistent drought, chronic poverty, starvation and distress migration. It is one among the 8 districts that come under the in-famous KBK region of Orissa. People's participation, transparency and accountability are the major areas of concern for ensuring good governance at the local level. Poor governance manifests acute poverty, lack of access to basic rights and entitlements of the poor and marginalized people of the region. However, the present grassroots governance system could be analysed</p>	
<p>Bolangir district – A Rationale</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75 % families reeling under poverty and 20% among them do not even get two square meals a day. • Government schemes and provisions do not seem to have the desired impact. Although OREGS (NREGA) has been implemented in the district since last year, more than one million people still work as wage labourers and marginal farmers forced to migrate out of the state for their livelihood. Children consists 40% out of those migrants. • Participation of poor and marginalized people including women in Palli Sabha and Gram Sabha is very minimal resulting in manipulation in selection of beneficiaries for various schemes and entitlements. The Gram Sabha and Palli Sabha meetings are rarely organised. • Persistent gender inequality at household level in decision-making, inequitable division of labour in agricultural and other domestic sectors, differential wage payment despite equal labour and skewed access and control over resources. This has raised several hurdles in women's empowerment efforts. • High percentage of illiteracy among women has become a major contributor to high MMR and IMR. • There is lack of transparency and accountability in implementation of development programmes. The duty bearers are hesitant in sharing data or information with the common citizens. • A cumulative consequence of all the above issues is a system of arbitrary and corrupt governance where the poorest have no say and are just passive participants. In the poverty cycle such a governance system reinforces the impoverishment processes stated above 	

leading to further marginalisation of the poor. And that is why ‘drought’ in Balangir is seen as being man-made and system failure rather than a natural phenomenon.		
	<u>Planned</u>	<u>Actual</u>
<i>Implementation period</i>	15 th June 2009-15 th June 2010	15 th June 2009-15 th August 2010 (March 2011, as mentioned in the visit)
<i>Total Budget</i> (for one year)	Rs. 146850	Rs. 525382
<i>PTF Contribution</i>		
<u>Project Objectives</u>		
<u>As described at Project Approval (for two years)</u>		<u>Status of Achievement at Completion¹</u> (in view of the Evaluator)
1. To organise and aware 8000 NREGA beneficiaries those who are under BPL of 8 Gram Panchayats on Wage rights & PDS and building civil society response to ensure their collective effort against corruption		2
2. To activate one Community based Organisation from each Gram Panchayat to vigilant the community in proper implementation of NREGA and PDS		4
3. To sensitise 8 Sarpanchas, 8 Secretaries, and Executive officers & Block functionaries in Loisingha block regarding their accountability for transparent implementation of NREGA and PDS in all 48 villages of the operational GPs.		4
4. To strengthen regular community monitoring of NREGA and PDS programme in the operational area through Citizen report card in all the 8 GPs		4
5. To sensitise the larger Civil Society Organisations involving CBOs, Media, Lawyers and intellectuals for collective action to put pressure on governance system for effective implementation of NREGA and PDS		3
6. To strengthen community action in streamlining the NREGA and PDS in 8 GPs under Loisingha block		2

¹ Please use the following ratings scale and provide brief narrative. 1 = fully achieved, very few or no shortcomings; 2 = largely achieved, despite a few short-coming; 3 = only partially achieved, benefits and shortcomings finely balanced; 4 = very limited achievement, extensive shortcomings; 5 = not achieved.

Executive Summary: (as mentioned in the project completion report)

The prime objective of the project was to reduce corruption in NREGA and PDS through promoting active citizenship and constructive engagement of duty bearers and also using some social accountability tools with community action in 48 villages of 8 Gram Panchayats under Loisingha block of Balangir district in Orissa.

During the first phase the status of corruption and irregularities in the both schemes were analyzed. It was found that the two major poverty alleviation programs of the govt. are totally defunct in all 8 GPs under the operational area. The main reason behind this was lack of information and knowledge within the targeted community and non-resistance against discrepancies of the duty bearers. Therefore, the initial activities were focused on promoting and strengthening community action. Durniti Nibarana Manch (anti-corruption forum) promoted at 48 villages, federated at 8 GPs and cluster level; facilitated the process of collective action against corruption. In the beginning of the CAC project communities did not receive proper quantity of food items (ration) and were paying extra amount of money to the shopkeepers. NREGS work in 8 GPs of the Loisingha Block was done through machines and job cards were kept at Panchayat level, people did not receive proper wages, payment was delay and they were not getting the worksite facilities. After the initiation of the CAC programme, most of the issues has been regularised through consistent action by the people's organisations. They are getting water and shed facilities in the worksite, use of machines has been stopped in 5 GPs and job cards have also been released from Panchayat office.

Constructive engagement of duty bearers has been focused in this project through involving block and district officials in the trainings, meetings and workshops. 18 cases on PDS and NREGA have been taken before the govt. authorities and they have taken positive action to regularize the same. NREGA and RTI have been taken up as prime agenda of discussion in the 'Taluk legal aid committee' under the Judicial Magistrate Court of Loisingha where Block level officials have initiated discussions on the same and committed for its effective implementation. 5 Gram Panchayat Executive Officers and Block GPEOs have cooperated in providing information through RTI. District and Block level Civil Supply Officers have taken serious disciplinary action against distributors found guilty of irregularities in the distribution of food items.

Capacity building of the community and different stakeholders was a focus area in CAC programme. Training programs were organized at community level, for CBOs and PRI members on effectiveness of the both schemes including use of RTI, Citizen Report Card, community monitoring to curb corruption. Anti-corruption committee members are regularly monitoring NREGS worksite to identify the issues and addressing them.

8 GP level sarpanch, executive officers, GRS and other community members are sensitised through orientation programs to check corruption in NREGS, PDS and all are made aware on use of RTI in different issue at community level. Most of the time we have seen labors are not interested to work in NREGS due to the late payment and they depend upon their agriculture and personal work. But now 40% of eligible laborers are working in NREGA.

Durniti Nibarman Manch members are sitting independently at village and GP level meeting and discussing on the issue relating to corruption in PDS and NREGA and taking collective action to resolve it.	
Top Three Results (actual). In view of the Evaluator)	1. Formation of 48 village, 8 block and 1 cluster level anti-corruption committees. 2. IEC material printed for awareness generation.
Overall Achievement Rating² in Evaluators view. Use numeric rating as well as narrative. See footnote 2.	3

Commentary to support overall assessment

***Guidance.** Please provide a narrative to accompany your overall achievement rating taking into account your overall assessment (in a maximum of 20 lines) of taking into account quality or project design, implementation performance and results achieved. Reasons for rating of 4 or more may please be explained here. It is suggested that this be written last after the detailed assessment (Section 2 below) has been done and Overall Achievement Rating determined.*

Adhar is a grassroots level organization that has worked for the upliftment of the marginalized specially in the Loisingha block of Balangir district of Orissa. This district also falls under the KBK (Kalahandi-Balangir-Koraput) region of Orissa, which is one of the most backward regions of the country characterized by high levels of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment etc.

The organization has taken up the task of reducing corruption in NREGA and PDS through the use of community monitoring mechanisms like RTIA, Citizen Report Cards etc. under the CAC programme. After a review of the project reports and the field visit, it can be said that the overall achievement rating for the project is 3 i.e. moderately satisfactory. This can be attributed to the fact that though the project staff has been successful in raising the awareness of the community and mobilizing them to form anti corruption committees at the village, block and cluster level, it could not initiate some of the planned project activities due to various reasons. Some of the major activities that were planned to strengthen the process of constructive engagement (block level interface, district level workshop) and community empowerment (social audit, public hearings, block level people’s conclave to submit memorandum to district administration) could not be implemented at the first place.

It is observed that the organization has formulated a lot of project objectives, which could have been clubbed or merged in a lot of places (details given in section 1). The constructive engagement plan lays huge emphasis on creating ties with govt. departments, but has no mention of other CSOs and media. However, it is observed that objective 5 of the project talk about sensitizing larger CSOs (media, NGOs, lawyers etc) for effective implementation of NREGA and PDS. Therefore, it can be said that though the project staff is clear and knows

² The degree to which the project achieved, or seems likely to achieve, all or most of its objectives and produced the outcomes projected in the logframe attached to the Project Proposal. The rating be based on, and consistent with, the detailed ratings in the Completion Assessment section.

that constructive engagement is a crucial part of the project, they are unable to articulate the same in writing.

With regard to project results, the biggest achievement is the formation of the anti corruption committees that are actively participating in taking up corruption issues. However, it was also felt that they were not empowered enough to take issues on their own. Also apart from the committee members, the role of youth is not prominent in the communities. Although they have been trained and capacitated, their participation is still not visible.

Completion Assessment³

1. Quality of the Project Design

a. Elaboration of the corruption problems to be addressed.	2
b. Clarity and relevance of the objectives to the corruption problem being addressed.	4
c. Proposed community empowerment activities	2
d. Coherence of Results Framework (Logframe)	2
e. Constructive engagement plan	3

Comments: (to support/explain rating and overall assessment)

- The corruption problems are stated clearly in the proposal. As the project aims to deal with corruption in both NREGA and PDS, problems and issues related to both of them are clearly mentioned.
- With regard to the objectives of the project, it can be said that they are measurable to some extent but not achievable and time bound. It is felt that the project has too many objectives, some of which could have been clubbed as they connote the same meaning. For example, objectives 4 and 6 largely talk about the involvement and participation of the community in regulating NREGA and PDS. In objective 4 community monitoring through the use of CRCs is specifically mentioned, which more or less comes under the domain of community action stated in objective 6. Also some of the objectives are not very clear in terms of numbers, for example objectives 1, 3 and 5 talk about awareness generation and sensitization of PRI members as well as larger civil society groups, but they fail to mention the targeted number of such activities/initiatives that would be conducted.
- Community empowerment is dealt with efficiently in the project proposal and the planned activities support and promote the process of community empowerment.

³ Ratings Scale: 1 = Highly Satisfactory or Likely; 2 = Satisfactory/Likely; 3 = Moderately Satisfactory/Likely; 4 = Moderately unsatisfactory/Unlikely; 5 = Unsatisfactory/Unlikely; 6 = Highly Unsatisfactory/Unlikely; NA = Not Applicable

From awareness generation to formation and promotion of community based organizations like youth groups, village anti-corruption committees and anti-corruption forum, as well as strengthening community action in various forms (community monitoring by using CRCs etc.), the element of empowerment is finely incorporated in the project.

- The logical framework is well framed and formulated. Most of the baseline values and end project targets are mentioned, making the project easy to implement and comprehended by the team.
- Activities under constructive engagement have been rated as 3 i.e. moderately satisfactory. This is because all the activities stated under the head are targeting towards engagement of government officials and departments only. There is no mention of engagement with local media, other like-minded organizations and district level forums and platforms. Therefore, it can be said that constructive engagement has not been handled holistically.

2. The Implementation Performance

a. Extent to which the planned project activities completed	4
b. Extent to which the planned outputs completed	3
c. Community empowerment initiatives implemented	3
d. Constructive engagement during implementation	4
e. Focus on sustainability	2

Comments:

- As far as the extent to which the completion of planned project activities is concerned, it can be said that it is moderately unsatisfactory. This is attributed to the fact that under most of the objectives, certain activities could not be taken up in the first phase of the project. For example, under objectives 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 orientation to the members of the GP level CBOs, interface with block level functionaries, quarterly analysis of CRCs, district level workshops, GP level social audit and public hearing etc. could not be taken up respectively.
- As the completion of planned outputs depends to a great extent on the implementation and completion of project activities, it is reflected that there were gaps in the completion of project outputs. For example, outputs like the review of NREGA and PDS by the community, quarterly analysis of the status of functioning of NREGA and PDS, GP level social audit and block level public hearings etc. could not be achieved. Also there were certain outputs that were in the process of being achieved or accomplished and not fully achieved at the end of the project period. Some of them

were the involvement of media and civil society groups in highlighting corruption issues, raising of community funds for campaign against corruption, community monitoring of NREGA work in 48 villages, sensitization of block and district level functionaries and suo moto disclosure of information.

- In terms of community empowerment, the initiatives could not be implemented as efficiently as planned in the proposal; therefore it has been rated as moderately satisfactory i.e. 3. Though most of the activities related to awareness generation and community mobilization could be undertaken in the course of the project, crucial activities that could have facilitated the process of community empowerment like community monitoring of NREGA and PDS through the use of CRCs, conducting social audits with the support of the NGO partner etc. could not take place. However, this does not mean that any of the community empowerment activities were not implemented. It was also observed that the project managed to form 48 village, 8 panchayat and 1 cluster level anti-corruption committees through a process of community mobilization and sensitization. These committees have also been trained and capacitated to take up corruption issues related to NREGA and PDS.
- With regard to constructive engagement it can be said that the implementation performance has been moderately unsatisfactory. This is because most of the important activities that facilitate constructive engagement like interface with block level functionaries on proper implementation of NREGA, PDS and RTI and organizing district level workshop involving CBOs, media, lawyers, intellectuals etc. for collective action to pressurize the authorities could not be conducted. However, the project team made consistent efforts to sensitize and involve govt. officials as well as the media and other organizations in the anti-corruption work on regular basis.
- The focus on sustainability during the implementation of project activities was quite satisfactory, as the project team has emphasized on the involvement and participation of the anti-corruption committees and community members in the activities of the project. The focus on developing a community fund for carrying forward the anti-corruption campaign also highlights the fact that sustainability is a major aspect of the project. Though regular funds are yet to be generated, the fund manages to handle expenses for small activities like photocopies, filling RTI applications and transportation charges etc.

3. The Results: (in the First year)

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|--|---|
| a. Accomplishments of the results specified in the logframe | 3 |
| b. Responsiveness of authorities to constructive engagement. | 4 |
| c. Effectiveness of community empowerment initiatives | 3 |
| d. Value added of peer learning activities and events. | 2 |

e. Project contribution to CSO partner capacity to carry out anti-corruption work.

2

f. Prospects for sustainability of project activities

2

Comments: *(Please briefly explain the ratings and any noteworthy aspects)*

- The results as specified in the logframe have more or less been accomplished, but not to the fullest. In other words it can be said that even among the results that could be achieved, there were certain gaps. Therefore it has been rated as moderately satisfactory. For example, though 850 fake job cards were identified, 1250 still remained; 85% NREGA work was conducted without the use of machines, still there were 15% irregularities in the same; 95 eligible families got PDS cards but 145 still remained; 20 out of 25 shops ensured actual quantity of rice, wheat and sugar but still there was diversion in kerosene oil etc.
- The responsiveness of the authorities to constructive engagement has been rated as moderately unsatisfactory based on the discussions with the project team and the reports. It was gathered that in the initial days of the project there was very strong resistance from the local level functionaries and PRI members regarding the anti-corruption activities, to the extent that one of the project staff was also made hostage. This led to the delay in implementing other important activities like social audit and public hearings in the community. However through the regular communication, sensitization and orientation of the officials, the project staff has managed to involve them in the activities of the programme.
- The effectiveness of community empowerment initiatives can be determined from the way the communities have been able to identify and deal with corruption issues (on their own) on one hand and also manage to reduce corruption on the other. In light of the same, it can be said that the performance has been moderately satisfactory. This is because of the fact that the community is aware of existing corruption issues and have also started participating in anti corruption initiatives. It was observed that the village, panchayat and cluster level anti-corruption committees have been successful in highlighting corruption issues in NREGA and PDS. However, inspite of these achievements, the community still has to go a long way to completely take charge of the situation and independently handle corruption issues. They still need to be capacitated and trained on the use of RTI, social audit, community monitoring tools like citizen report cards etc. so that they can track the progress/status of these schemes at the local level.
- With regard to the prospects of sustainability of the project activities, it can be said that it is quite satisfactory. The anti corruption committees developed and promoted under the project at different levels have already started exhibiting their potential in terms of taking forward corruption issues. If further strengthened and trained, they would be able to deal corruption issues efficiently.

4. Impact of the project on reduction in corruption

The project is successful in bringing forward some success stories in terms of improvements in service delivery and reduction in corruption to some extent. Though this change might be very nominal, but it is worth appreciating, considering the implementation time of the project. These impacts can be seen in the form of increased participation and involvement of the anti corruption committees in raising their voices against corruption. To state a few examples, in Thakurapalli village, through the efforts of the anti corruption committee the discrepancies in distribution of kerosene oil were resolved and the dealer was suspended; in Uparbahal GP, the anti corruption committee helped in ensuring that right (25 kgs) of rice was distributed to the beneficiaries as compared to 4-5 kgs that was given initially. With regard to NREGA, the increase in the average work days from 30 to 60, completion of work (85%) without contractors and machines, reduction in fake cards etc. reflect that the project has been able to bring about some change at the grassroots level.

5. PAC-PTF Advice (Please consult CSO Partner)

- a. Value added of PTF technical advice
- b. Value added of PAC technical advice

Comments: *(In your comments please include Strong and weakest points of PTF-PAC interventions and suggestions for improvement)*

As per the discussion with the project team, it was revealed that they have incorporated most of the suggestions and comments given by PTF/PAC on the proposal. For example, one of the comments on the proposal was the inclusion of monitoring and evaluation process within the project, which was initially missing and now has been included. However, it is observed that no changes were made to the project objectives, though certain changes were pointed out by PTF/PAC.

- **Strong points**

The strong point of PTF/PAC interventions is the process of feedback followed at the time of submission of proposals. The exercise helped the organization to rework on the proposal more effectively. The review of the project by other CAC partners is another strong point of the intervention as it helped the organization in internalizing and reflecting on its implementation strategy.

- **Weak points**

As far as the weak points are concerned, it can be said that there is lack of technical support to the organization on regular basis, specially with regard to documentation.

Suggestions for improvements:

- It is suggested that PTF/PAC should emphasize more on providing regular feedback and support to the organization on their reports and quality of writing.
- Support should be extended in helping Adhar to devise more strategic constructive engagement strategies, keeping in mind the status of their rapport with the block level and local functionaries. PTF/PAC can also guide and help Adhar to foster district and state level alliances with like-minded organizations and groups.
- Also there is a need to focus more intensively on the overall strengthening of the community and not just the anti corruption committees formed under the project. This would help in the holistic development and growth of the targeted community.