

CARE Bangladesh is implementing the Journey for Advancement in Transparency, Representation and Accountability (JATRA) project. The project aims to strengthen the Union Parishads' (Lowest tier of local government divided into 9 wards) public finance management systems so that they are more transparent and aligned with the Local Government Act 2009. The project endeavors to ensure active participation of the community leaders, especially women, in key decision making spaces and bodies. Moreover, JATRA strives to allow the wider community to play an active role in social accountability mechanisms to ensure inclusive democratic processes, equal access to quality services and access to accurate information at all levels of Union Parishad.

JOURNEY FOR ADVANCEMENT IN TRANSPARENCY, REPRESENTATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY (JATRA)



Fostering Responsive Local Government through Participatory Evaluation of Elected Representatives

Changing the mindset of local government representatives on inclusive governance processes is always challenging. The JATRA project has adopted a tool developed by CARE Bangladesh to facilitate a six month participatory performance evaluation of Union Parishad elected representatives, with the objective of foster self-responsibility and accountability. This tested participatory process has been employed in the working unions of JATRA. The UP evaluation is closely connected to the Union's 5 year vision for development, set by the UP members themselves; they are evaluated against their own aims.

The participatory UP evaluation is conducted every six months during the monthly coordination meeting of UPs. Firstly, each elected representative gives themselves a mark out of 10 for a series of indicators, after reflecting on his or her own performance over the last six months. In each union, the evaluation indicators were determined in a participatory process with consultation with the union's Citizen Forum and UP representatives. The indicators focus on the attitude and behavior of UP members, especially with poor citizens; their timely attendance of public events; UP members being responsive to public queries; fulfilment of commitments given to citizens; and progress on issues identified in their union's participatory poverty analysis (also facilitated by JATRA).



Citizen forum members marking score to UP members in evaluation session in Kishoregari UP



In the second year of JATRA, CARE introduced an adaptation to the participatory UP evaluation process. Given that UP members have a significant responsibility to manage block grants from the Local Government Support Program (LGSP II), evaluation criteria from LGSP II was included in the participatory UP evaluation. These evaluation criteria are: planning and budgeting; fiduciary aspects (expenditure, financial management, procurement and reporting); own source revenue mobilization; transparency and accountability; and democratic governance.



Evaluation session of performance review in Kashirambelpukur UP

The evaluation session is held in the presence of others in a meeting, and representatives have to justify their scores. This process creates an opportunity for elected representatives to reflect on their own performance. Once UP members self-score, the Citizen Forum is then given the opportunity to score each member against the same indicators.

Before the participatory UP evaluation meeting, the union's Citizen Forum consults with every ward, to gain citizen perspectives related to UP member contributions to local poverty alleviation processes. The perspectives of communities are disclosed in a very simple manner, in the public meeting. Citizen Forum



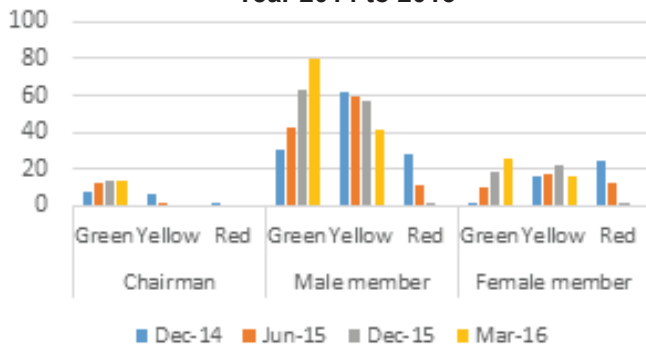
Community discussion on priority issues in Kashirambelpukur UP

representatives give a 'green card' to the members whose performance is very satisfactory. The 'yellow card' is given to the members whose performance is moderately satisfactory, but there is scope for further improvement. The 'red card' is given to the members whose performance is not satisfactory. Because the UP members know that they will see the public perspective after they have self-scored, they remain cautious about exaggeration during their self-assessment. The differences between the scoring of UP members and the scoring of civil society representatives are discussed in an open forum, and UP members commit to remedial actions.



The outcome of performance review in Nitai UP

Progression of Performance from Year 2014 to 2015



Result: The graph depicts that there are progressive increases in performance. Fewer red cards have been handed out by civil society to UP members over time. This activity has led to: enhanced positive competition amongst UP representatives; a positive mindset among UP chairmen and UP members to embrace public accountability and feedback; increased responsiveness from UP members for implementation of planned activities within the stipulated time; and increased public participation of the community leaders from the poorest and most marginalized communities. In parallel, the monitoring data from the LGSP II audit report also reveals that the average UP performance rating has sequentially increased (14 in 2014, 17 in 2015 and 19 in 2016). Farther more, the tracking of performance grants reveals that 6 Union Parishad obtained performance block grant in 2014-15 fiscal year that have gone up to 9 Union Parishad in 2015-16.



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