



Citizen Voices Key to Sustainable Healthcare Reform

The [Partnership for Transparency Fund \(PTF\)](#) concentrates its work in the healthcare sector of developing countries in two related areas: citizen monitoring and engagement. The projects PTF supports, led and implemented by local civil society organizations (CSOs), aim to improve the lives of poor people whose healthcare services are characterized by inefficiency, waste and corruption.

The misappropriation of funds for health services, the theft of medicines, the distribution of out-of-date drugs and/or counterfeit products, plus extortion of ill people by healthcare providers, adds gravely to human misery. PTF focuses on supporting CSOs to have real impact by strengthening transparency and the public accountability of those most responsible for the provision and delivery of health services. Constructive engagement by CSOs with public authorities – at the local and the national levels – is essential to ensuring sustainable reforms.

PTF's innovative approaches place citizens first. People seeking health services are best able to report on the inefficiency, waste and corruption that they confront. Ensuring that these citizens have the opportunity to voice their grievances is the most compelling means of promoting reforms. The lessons that PTF has learned are drawn from citizen monitoring of health services in over a dozen dedicated health projects in six countries over the past decade, as well as PTF's broader project experiences. PTF has completed more than 250 CSO-implemented projects over the last 15 years with many of these involving the delivery of basic social services to the poor.

PTF supported projects have monitored the provision of overall public health services at the local level, such as the procurement and provision of drugs to clinics. Projects have also empowered citizens to use hard evidence found through strategic monitoring to campaign for reforms and to constructively engage with healthcare providers. The lessons of experience that PTF has gained from its work in to the healthcare sector help to inform future projects by official donor agencies, philanthropic foundations and civil society organizations (CSOs).

Lessons from PTF Experience

Experience in partnering with citizen organizations working in the health sector has yielded valuable lessons that PTF is applying across a range of programs, positioning it for successful design and

Checking Corruption in the Health Sector



In 2009-2010, PTF worked with The Ayauskam, an NGO in Orissa State, to train volunteers, women change agents and youth, and to engage with government officials through rallies, studies and dialogue. The citizen voice created by the project generated significant improvements in health service delivery: bribes to health staff have been eliminated for 80% of women, and 70% of people report that they are no longer paying bribes. Free medicines became available for the first time, reaching 60% of people applying for them; coverage of pre-natal and antenatal care rose from 10% to 90% of mothers; and nutrition service coverage rose from 20% of children and 40% of women to near universal coverage.

implementation of health projects in the future. Some of these include the following:

- Raising public awareness of rights, particularly the costs of specific medicines and treatments, is a key first-step to ensuring these rights are appropriately fulfilled.
- Projects should be designed to cover a wide range of healthcare issues so that they are capable of hearing a wide variety of citizen voices and be responsive to their greatest concerns.
- Constructive engagement with authorities is the most effective way to resolve issues and achieve change.
- Advocacy is more powerful with partnerships between CSOs at the national level, who have access to decision-makers, and the local level, who can ensure that service delivery is supported by systemic or policy changes.
- Volunteer citizen committees, trained and supported by CSOs and NGOs, are powerful agents to identify corruption and push for improvements.
- Anti-corruption commissions and public service codes of conduct can be helpful in elevating corruption issues and strengthening accountability among service providers.

Applying the Lessons of PTF Experience and Scaling-Up: Citizen Action Platform

PTF is applying many of its lessons learned in healthcare projects in a new project – [Citizens Action Platform \(CAP\)](#) – launched in Uganda in partnership with local CSO, the [Anti-Corruption Coalition of Uganda \(ACCU\)](#). The project harnesses information and communications technology (ICT) to revolutionize traditional models of citizen reporting of public failures. Reports are easier to collect, verify, track, aggregate and present to service providers, so communities can more effectively and efficiently resolve individual issues and advocate for systemic change.

The processing of citizen reported grievances for redress through the CAP is executed in five steps:

1. Collect grievances from citizens through the locally relevant mechanisms (ex: SMS, call center, community meeting, suggestion box)
2. Verify, aggregate and analyze grievances collected
3. Constructively engage with health service providers to resolve grievances
4. Respond to citizens about the outcome of engagement with health providers
5. Visualize and map grievance reports and resolution outcomes

In September 2014, PTF initiated a one-year pilot of the CAP in Uganda to address the delivery of health services in Apac, a place whose main town TIME magazine called ‘the most malarial town on earth.’ The region has experienced significant public outcry about poor health services, relating to missing medications, absentee health workers, solicitation of bribes, and lack of medical supplies, often resulting from a lack of transparency and corruption. PTF’s local CSO partners are implementing the project to empower citizens to report instances of abuse, malpractice, or corruption within the health sector, learn from the data collected and resolve grievances.

We see great potential in bringing customizable, open source technology platforms together with our proven approach of citizen action and constructive engagement with government. We have 15 years of proof that empowering citizens to report corruption improves the treatment they receive. Our civil society partners are eager to deploy CAP and take it to scale in their own backyards. We are committed to the success of this project and are seeking partners to help us fulfill its potential.