



# Improving Development Outcomes through Citizen Engagement

A national workshop to reflect on the experiences and impact of the Citizen Action for Results, Transparency and Accountability (CARTA) Program in Bangladesh



# CARTA

## Citizen Action for Results, Transparency and Accountability

Over the past four years, the Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF) has collaboratively managed the CARTA program with the Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) in Bangladesh and Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation in Nepal. The program built the capacity of local CSOs to monitor the implementation of World Bank supported projects.

Since 2011, 12 sub-grants have been awarded, 6 each in Bangladesh and Nepal, totaling US\$1.29 million to

support 11 World Bank financed projects in infrastructure, health, education and local government. The sub-projects differed in scope, but all focused on empowering beneficiaries to demand greater transparency and accountability in resource use, delivery of services and grievance resolution.

CARTA marks the first time a major development organization has permitted independently financed participatory monitoring and evaluation managed by a third-party.



# Improving Development Outcomes through Citizen Engagement: Lessons Learned from the CARTA Program

Reviewing the impact of citizen-led social accountability in the selected World Bank projects and paving the way for the future

*“The philosophy of civil society engagement is absolutely vital. This is something that will encourage us to take it forward.”*

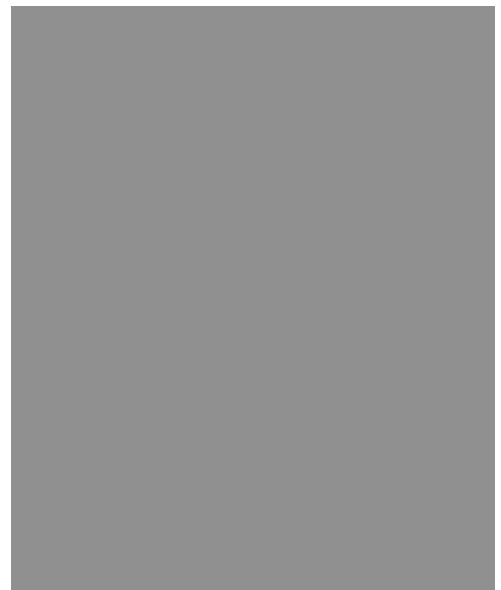
- Dr. Gowher Rizvi  
Advisor to the  
Honorable Prime  
Minister, Government  
of Bangladesh

On June 15, 2015, a workshop was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh to review the lessons learned from the Citizen Action for Results, Transparency and Accountability (CARTA) Program. The event, hosted by the Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) and the Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF), in partnership with the Japanese Social Development Fund (JSDF) and the World Bank, brought together more than 100 participants from government officials, donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and relevant stakeholders to reflect on the impact and future use of social accountability to improve service delivery in the country.

The workshop featured dynamic keynote speeches from Dr. Shamsul Alam, Senior Secretary of the General Economic Division in the Planning Commission of the Government of Bangladesh, Salman Zahid, Acting Director of the World Bank Country Office in Bangladesh and Dr. Gowher Rizvi, Advisor to the Honorable Prime Minister of Bangladesh. Other local and national government representatives identified areas where citizen engagement improved outcomes and where

there may be entry points for further activities. The speakers gave recommendations to mainstream social accountability and citizen engagement approaches.

Implementing CSOs attended the workshop, including the Bangladesh Disaster Preparedness Center (BDPC), Democracy Watch, Agrogoti Sangstha, RDRS Bangladesh, the Resource Integration Center (RIC) and the Population Service and Training Center (PSTC), as well as numerous beneficiaries of the CARTA program from around the country. Sky-Samaj, Samuhik Abhiyan, the Vijaya Development Resource Center (VDRC), Nucleus for Empowerment through Skill Transfer (NEST) and Friends Service Council Nepal (FCSN), were also in attendance to share their experiences with implementing social accountability tools through the CARTA program in Nepal. Other donor and government representatives attended from the European Union, the United National Development Programme (UNDP), the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Canadian Foreign Ministry in Bangladesh.



## INAUGURAL SESSION

Both the government of Bangladesh and the World Bank have made major commitments towards encouraging greater citizen engagement. The workshop's inaugural session reviewed the benefits of citizen engagement and encouraged greater citizen involvement in social accountability.

Tjaarda Storm van Leeuwen, CARTA Program Director at the Partnership for Transparency Fund, pointed out important nuances of the program – “CARTA’s monitoring mechanisms are not the same as auditing. Rather, it’s a form of risk mitigation by creating beneficiary feedback channels. In this way, the World Bank is able to see an accurate picture of project perception on the ground and make adjustments as needed.”

“Citizen engagement is a big part of our strategy to improve project results for both service providers and recipients,” explained Mr. Salman Zaidi, Acting Director of the World Bank Country Office in Bangladesh, “and CARTA has gathered tremendous experience in terms of

how citizen engagement can play a very constructive role in development outcomes.”

Monwar Ali, Additional Chief Engineer in the Department of Public Health and Engineering of the Government of Bangladesh, addressed the importance of independence “We need an agency that’s not tied to government or donors – one that is independent and has reach in the field,” he explained.

Dr. Gowher Rizvi, Advisor to the Honorable Prime Minister of Bangladesh, also provided some insight into the government’s perspective on CARTA: “All of our programs are predicated on the philosophy that government alone is not able to develop our country... What you have done is provide the resources that make it possible for the people to express themselves in a constructive manner and for us to gain from their knowledge.” He closed the session with concern over the project’s completion and hopefulness that new initiatives around citizen engagement would continue.



“CARTA’s value added was to begin to build a body of knowledge on good practices of social accountability. There have been elements of citizen engagement in many World Bank projects for many years now, but CARTA allowed us to evaluate social accountability tools in a more scientific way so as to inform the design of future projects.”

- **Shaheen Anam, Executive Director,  
Manusher Jonno Foundation**



## SESSION I:

### OPENING THE CIVIC SPACE FOR ENGAGEMENT TO IMPROVE DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

Citizen engagement has been a challenge for World Bank projects. Although provisions for this type of activity are commonly included in project designs, many fall short in obtaining truly meaningful community participation. Initial results of the CARTA program suggest that with an independent third-party financed and administered citizen engagement effort, World Bank projects saw a major improvement in community participation, as well as in implementation. Knud Kjaer Nielsen, moderator of the first session, framed the discussion around one primary question: Why did the CARTA program make a difference?

Ms. Taherunnessa Abdullah, Adviser of Democracy Watch, the implementing partner for the Local Government Support Project II (LGSP-II) CARTA sub-project, noted that training on and application of social audit tools had a major impact. "CARTA made it easier to get information from communities and provided concrete tasks for them to get involved," she explained. Indeed, the results of the sub-project are impressive – 100% of community members had knowledge of the LGSP-II scheme at the end of the sub-project, compared to 58% at the start, 100% of Union Parishads properly disseminated information through notice boards, compared to 70% at the initial stage, and tax collection increased from 77% to 83%.

World Bank Task Team Leader for the Rural Electrification and Renewable Energy Development (RERED) project, Zubair Sadeque, noted the benefit of gaining an "outside objective view of what beneficiaries are getting and not getting." Through feedback from the CARTA sub-project, his team realized the poor levels of communication between customers and service providers, leading to customer dissatisfaction. "Third party monitoring gave us some really good insights into how the NGOs were installing the solar panel systems, how much time they took training customers, and how long it took to deal with complaints from customers," said Sadeque,

View expressed by the Government of Bangladesh on the CARTA program were similar. The Social Development Foundation (SDF) of the Ministry of Finance emphasized the action-oriented nature of CARTA activities to monitor the Social Investment Program Project (SIPP-II). "The [World Bank project] operations manual was very big, very difficult for people to understand," said Sakhawat Hossain, Managing Director of the Foundation, "through the CARTA sub-project, we discussed this with the World Bank, who in turn revised the manuals, and hosted a workshop at the regional level. This made it much easier for the community to take action." Yahya Bhuiyan, Deputy Project Director of LGSP-II in the Local Government Division, called the CARTA sub-project activities "unique, new, and, very effective." He cited the significant value added in terms of "community participation, transparency, accountability and good governance."

"ONCE THE COMMUNITIES UNDERSTOOD THIS WAS ABOUT THEIR OWN INTEREST AND BEGAN LEARNING HOW THE PROCESS COULD HELP THEM, THAT'S WHEN PEOPLE BECAME INTERESTED IN BEING PART OF THE PROGRAM... ONLY THEN WAS THERE OWNERSHIP."

- SHAHIN KAUSER,  
CARTA PROGRAM  
MANAGER, MANUSHER  
JONNO FOUNDATION

# LOCAL VOICES

## Community members in CARTA sub-project areas share their perspectives.

The workshop provided the opportunity for several community members, particularly active in a CARTA sub-project, to participate in the workshop and share their perspectives.

Generally, the participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to learn the skills required to participate in the programs and take ownership in the development of their communities.

Overall, capacity building “changed the mindset” of the local community, increasing transparency and accountability in nearly all aspects.

“Through CARTA, the community can now ensure transparency and accountability of service providers.”

- Abdur Salan, UP Representative, Jessore



“After the execution of CARTA, the people’s mindset had changed – we are able to ask for the change we want.”

- Salma Akhter, Community Member



“Accountability is important in any situation, but the the official accountability tools employed through CARTA were very helpful in constructively reducing the gap between service recipients and providers”

- Kamrun Naher, Manager, Organization for Social Action and Development (OSAD), Nawabganj



“Before CARTA, I was not even aware that I was the Chair Person of the Committee! Through CARTA, I was made aware of my responsibilities, and now they are clear.”

- Omed Ali  
Community Member

## SESSION 2:

### EXPERIENCE INSTITUTIONALIZING CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT –

### WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED FROM CARTA AND THE WAY FORWARD?

“CARTA WAS THE FIRST TIME THE CONCEPT OF INDEPENDENT THIRD PARTY MONITORING WAS INTRODUCED IN BANGLADESH. WHEN STARTING SOMETHING NEW, YOU’RE BOUND TO HAVE COMPLICATIONS. OUR PURPOSE HERE IS TO DISCUSS THESE DIFFICULTIES AND WORK THROUGH THEM IN THE SPIRIT OF DEMOCRACY.”

- TAKAYUKI KAWAKAMI,  
FIRST SECRETARY OF THE  
EMBASSY OF JAPAN

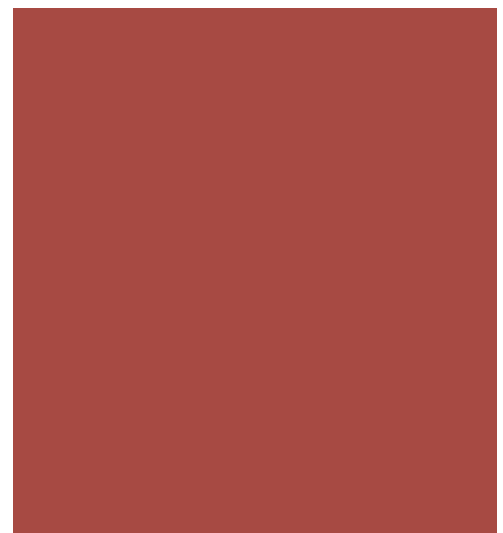
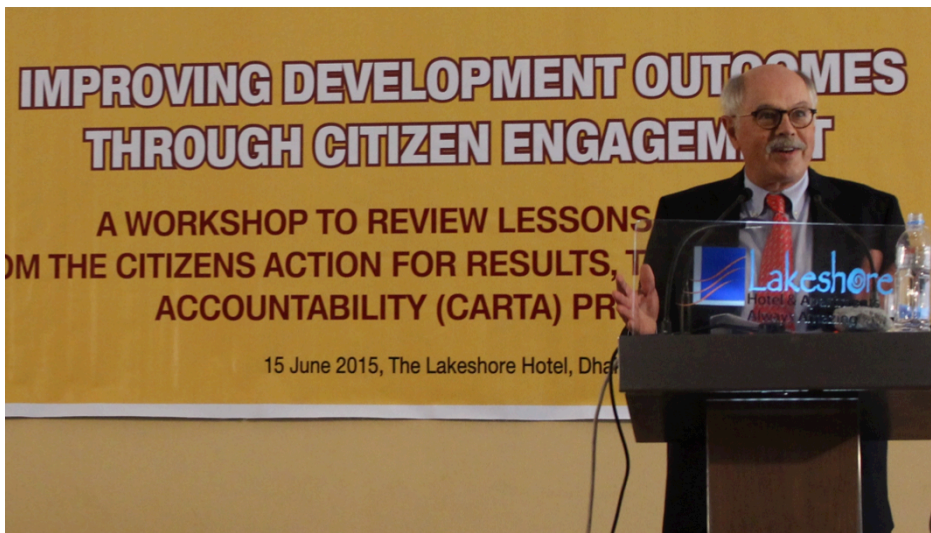


Citizen engagement has been an important element of development projects for decades. The impacts of these efforts, however, have proven to be highly context specific and sensitive to government and citizens' capacity to engage. The positive results of the CARTA program are encouraging, but could be limited in scope and duration, begging the question: What is the way forward?

Luiza Nora, a Social Development Specialist at the World Bank, explained that from the donor perspective, citizen engagement is about making aid more effective. “The question isn’t about how accountability, but rather how we can work together with citizens to use resources more effectively.” She explained that the CARTA experience provided valuable knowledge about channels for sustainable and effective citizen engagement.

Discussants working primarily at the local level emphasized the need to build citizen capacity and interest for sustainable success. “We had some difficulty reaching people,” explained Abdur Salan, a Union Parashad Representative, “but after [the CARTA program] people began demanding our attention, making it much easier to interact with them and get the feedback we need.” Syed Rashed Al Zeyed, a Senior Economist from the World Bank’s country office, also noted this issue: “In Jessore, committees used to consist of powerful people, their friends and families, and most ordinary people didn’t know they were allowed to participate. CARTA has increased this awareness among the public and now that they understand their role, now they’re very involved.”

Meg McDermott, an International Fulbright Clinton Fellow working with the Local Government Engineering Department, provided an insightful perspective on the CARTA model’s unique value added: “I’ve had the opportunity to interview beneficiaries about their engagement in development projects – both as a representative of the government and as an individual. In my experience, CARTA has demonstrated very clearly the significant value added from *independent* third party monitoring. It’s a real opportunity to take these ideas and mainstream effective third party monitoring within all projects.”



## CLOSING SESSION

The CARTA program was a pilot to test a model of independent third-party support for local CSOs to implement social accountability work. It proved effective and efficient, but most of all, provided a valuable learning experience for all stakeholders – from citizens and CSOs to governments and development agencies. The closing session of the national workshop in Bangladesh was to synthesize the most salient lessons of the experience.

The most evident themes of the workshop was CARTA's value added in terms of local empowerment and ownership to demand good governance. CARTA made citizens and village committees more aware and capable of performing their roles and responsibilities. As they became more informed and empowered, their meaningful participation increased in the World Bank projects. Implementing CSOs were adamant that the program's impacts hinged on empowerment, not on the use of social accountability tools. The tools were the method, but the critical difference was communities taking ownership of the processes to hold public officials accountable.

Showcasing the individual sub-project impacts also demonstrated clearly that citizen demand for accountability

is highly effective in increasing the impact of development projects. Where the CARTA model was applied, World Bank projects saw an increase in the percentage of citizens that received benefits to which they were entitled. Likewise, grievance mechanisms functioned better when services were not provided as directed and local governments became more responsive to the community.

The CARTA experience demonstrates that community empowerment and social accountability reinforce each other and make development projects more effective. Therefore, monitoring and evaluation should not be limited to procedures and achievement of results, but should also empower beneficiaries to a point where they are willing and able to demand good governance in projects. This inevitably requires considerable capacity building at the local level. On-the-job training for CSOs through CARTA proved to be a good catalyst to build the necessary environment and skills within local communities.

The CARTA experience made significant contributions to the evidence base for action-oriented interventions on the demand side of good governance. Visit [www.ptfund.org](http://www.ptfund.org) to access additional information and share your own insights.



**“You have made it possible for people to become involved in the development process. It is their knowledge for us to gain.”**

- **Dr. Gowher Rizvi, Advisor to the Honorable Prime Minister, Government of Bangladesh**



## Sponsored by

Manusher Jonno  
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## Participating CSOs

Agrogoti Sangstha

Bangladesh Disaster  
Preparedness Center (BDPC)

Democracy Watch

Friends Service Council Nepal  
(FCSN)

Nucleus for Empowerment  
through Skill Transfer (NEST)

Population Service and  
Training Center (PSTC)

RDRS Bangladesh

Resource Integration Center  
(RIC)

Samuhik Abhiyan

Sky-Samaj

Vijaya Development Resource  
Center (VDRC)



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Development Fund  
(JSDF)

## Additional Information

Visit [www.ptfund.org](http://www.ptfund.org) for more information on the CARTA program. There you will find individual sub-project webpages, videos, updates, evaluations and links to partner organizations.

You may also e-mail [info@ptfund.org](mailto:info@ptfund.org) with specific inquiries for information or partnership.

*“We are collectively trying to achieve one thing: improve the lives of the most vulnerable by ensuring the resources go where they are intended.”*

– Shaheen Anam,  
Executive Director,  
Manusher Jonno  
Foundation



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