



Empowering the Community to Demand Corruption-Free Social Services in Karnataka, India

CSO:	Swami Vivekananda Youth Movement (SVYM)
Years:	2009 - 2010
Country:	Karnataka, India
Amount:	\$19,400 USD
Sector:	1) Controlling Corruption in Delivery of Social Services: Social Safety Net 2) Right to Information

Corruption Problem:	Lack of Information and Citizen Awareness does not counteract Corrupt Service Delivery
Tools employed:	Survey, Awareness Raising, Capacity Building, RTI, Multi-stakeholder Meeting, Youth Empowerment

Corruption and poor service delivery in the distribution of social safety net entitlements under the Public Distribution System (PDS) in the Mysore District of Karnataka State, has prompted the Swami Vivekananda Youth Movement (SVYM) to increase citizen awareness, empower youth groups and launch a fully fledged Right-to-Information (RTI) campaign to enable communities to demand responsiveness and better service delivery from the Fair Price Shops (FPS) responsible for the PDS entitlement distribution. SVYM has successfully implemented the “Community Movement against Corruption” project and is currently building on that success conducting a second phase with the objective to further institutionalize citizen oversight, particularly Citizen Vigilance Committees ensuring financial, technical, social and institutional sustainability of the results achieved thus far.

Corruption Problem Addressed

SVYM conducted a baseline survey that identified irregularities and documented the extent of corruption experienced. These issues included the quality and quantity of food grains distributed under the PDS scheme, the maintenance of

records, insufficient supply and overpricing, faulty measuring devices, hoarding grains and black marketing. Eligible citizens did not receive ration cards while ineligible persons received Below Poverty Line (BPL) cards. Vigilance committees and community oversight to demand better service delivery were not well functioning.

FPS owners routinely denied citizens their mandated rations, keenly aware that beneficiaries would not approach the oversight authorities due to a lack of awareness and information about their rights. Not all FPSs displayed correct information, including stock positions and prices on the display boards. 41% of households said there was sufficient information displayed while 42.4% said it was incomplete. Roughly 16% reported that there was either no display board or no information written on it. About 5% had no knowledge about the necessity for a display board at all. At the same time it was found that if individual beneficiaries demanded the full entitlement, FPS owners tended to issue the allotted rations without demur.

Actions Taken by SVYM

At the outset of the project SVYM conducted an extensive baseline survey, which helped to pinpoint particular issues and weaknesses in the PDS distribution scheme. Upon analysis of the survey, SVYM organized recurring multi-stakeholder meetings bringing together government officials, FPS owners, CSOs, CBOs and community members in order to foster constructive engagement between the different parties.



RTI clinic at a village fair

SVYM engaged in a variety of activities geared toward awareness raising and capacity building that included tools and strategies such as street plays and video showings, the use of various media outlets, street paintings and even door-to-door campaigning. Overall SVYM trained some 1075 students in 17 schools and empowered 80 youth groups to as well as 60 NGO representatives to use the Right to Information (RTI) Act as a tool to demand information. The trainings often included government officials. SVYM furthermore laid the groundwork to install and empower citizen vigilance committees, a task to be implemented during the second phase of the project. To achieve sustainability, SVYM has paid special attention toward fostering young leaders with the intention to groom youths to take the fight against corruption forward in the future.

Impact and Results Achieved

The results achieved include:

- ✓ 300 new BPL cardholders from within the project area, out of a total of 536 newly distributed cards.
- ✓ Critically augmented awareness levels regarding beneficiaries' rights and responsibilities toward entitlements from FPS owners by the community.
- ✓ Government officials maintain closer contact with the public and have become more responsive. FPS owners have agreed to work with SVYM and the community.
- ✓ Youth groups have actively started demanding their full entitlements from FPS owners.
- ✓ The number of RTI applications has increased, as has use of SVYM's RTI Facilitation Center.

Government officials have started attending all meetings organized by SVYM and interact regularly with communities, showing an increased rate of responsiveness and accountability. Another result was the increased focus exhibited by the Food Inspector who now pays special attention to PDS and visits FPSs in the villages and tribal hamlets regularly, along with SVYM team members, taking necessary action if needed.

Documentation

Project completion reports (PCRs) and Project completion assessments (PCAs) can be accessed at www.ptfund.org under the "Where-we-work" section.

The SVYM website can be accessed at <http://www.svym.org/>

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