Empirical Approaches for Identifying Reform Areas & Tracking Effectiveness of Reforms

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Introduction

It has been the experience of Transparency International - Bangladesh (TIB) that solid documentary evidence is hard to challenge. Surveys, if credibly undertaken, are invaluable in providing hard data, and armed with such data, it is much harder for officials simply to brush the matter aside as baseless. Moreover, the public relations impact is always much greater as can be seen from the press coverage on issues related to corruption.

The findings of the *Survey on Corruption in Bangladesh* carried out by TIB confirmed the level and extent of corruption in Bangladesh. It vindicated the widely held view that corruption in the service delivery sector is pervasive and endemic, and that at every step of daily life a citizen has to pay bribes to get things done. The other side of the coin is that the brazen attitude of officials in the public sector is quite remarkable. The general attitude is that the general public has very little option but to pay up in order to get the work done.

So far TIB has undertaken the following surveys:

1. News scan analysis;
2. Pilot Survey;
3. Nationwide survey;
4. Focus Group Discussions;
5. Governance Survey on behalf of Human Development Centre, which has been recently published by HDC.

The following surveys TIB will carry out or is/will be involved with:

1. Municipal election survey (not published yet);
3. Survey of civil servants by Professor Muzaffer Ahmad, Trustee of TI-Bangladesh, on behalf of the World Bank;
3. Bribery Propensity Index on business in Bangladesh (not published yet); and
4. Bribe Payers' Survey (to be undertaken).

Different methodologies have been applied to the five surveys already undertaken. News Scan analysis has looked at daily newspapers over a period of six months and has analysed the nature and intensity of news coverage in relation to corruption in the field of service delivery. The survey provided TIB with reliable indicators regarding the areas of main concern. The results were applied to the Pilot and Nationwide surveys. TIB believes that before changes could be undertaken to improve the delivery of public services in general it is important to have a good picture of the present situation, as a benchmark for assessing the success of remedial measures.

The survey was also an important way of raising awareness that poor public services are a problem that can be tackled and signals to the public that their needs and views can be taken into account when planning services.

The Pilot and Nationwide Household (hh) surveys involved 620 hhs and 2500 hhs, respectively. The following steps could be identified:

Step 1.
Meeting with NGOs active in human rights and legal aid areas
Discussion on concept of corruption at the community level

Step 2.
Meeting with concerned Ministries to check out their concern about corruption and enlisting support.

Step 3.
Generate randomised households with widest possible coverage

Step 4.
Pre-testing draft questionnaire

Step 5.
Finalisation of questionnaire

Step 6.
Survey by investigators under supervision

Step 7.
Analysis
Discussion with community with preliminary tabulated results for validation and recording a consensus on remedy

Step 8.
Discussion with officials at the local level

Step 9.
Finalisation of report

Step 10.
Presentation of survey results

As a follow-up to the Pilot and Nationwide surveys a series of focus group discussions were held throughout Bangladesh. These discussions involved individuals who are perceived to be 'victims' and 'villains'. Through such discussion mechanisms of corrupt practice, effects on society and remedial steps in order to curb corruption were highlighted. A report *Corruption as People See it* was published based on these discussions.

Governance Survey

TIB undertook the country survey for the Human Development Centre in 1999 and the findings have been published in the report ***Human Development in South Asia 1999: The Crisis of Governance.*** The total number of interviews was 524, with more weight being given to rural areas: 305 respondents were chosen from rural centres as compared to 219 from urban sectors. The sample was considerably gender-biased, consisting of only 25 per cent females. Major findings were:

* Half of those interviewed expressed faith in the political system
* 76% believed their political leaders to be corrupt
* 98% believed that women and minorities should be equal partners in governance structures
* More than 50% showed dissatisfaction with the delivery of public services
* Corruption was seen mostly as bribery and the misuse of power by those in authority
* 36% thought that corruption had increased over the past five years
* 82% considered the police department to be the most corrupt government department