

USAID / Bangladesh NGO Development in the Area of Anti-Corruption: A Success Story

A modest investment from USAID has already assisted Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) to become registered with the NGO Affairs Bureau, develop its management and accounting systems, and start-up a movement against corruption.

Corruption is widespread in Bangladesh, taking many forms and having a major impact on all aspects of social and economic life. TIB conducted a corruption perception survey in 1997, identifying the most common types of corruption in Bangladesh. This survey resonated with the public, the press, and donors, and is still frequently quoted.

TIB's prominent Board of Trustees has a vision to structure the program locally to provide increased transparency to the delivery of government services and nationally to provide the analysis to inform the public on the costs and nature of corruption. TIB ultimately aims to have a network of local level "Committees of Concerned Citizens," local level watchdog groups addressing the lack of transparency in public services such as education and health care. Regional Advice and Information Centers (AICs) will receive and manage information gathered by CCCs and serve as a resource for a wide range of concerned citizens groups and individuals.

In 1998, regional ESF funding was received specifically for anti-corruption activities. USAID indicated its receptiveness to a much smaller proposal from TIB than was being discussed with the larger donor consortium. This would allow TIB to begin to establish and experiment with its proposed program and organizational components on a small scale while addressing issues raised by donors.

During this first year, TIB was able to hire a core staff, set up a headquarters office, and establish its first two CCCs in the greater Mymensingh District, two hours north of Dhaka. USAID DG Team members visiting in December found the leaders of this CCC to be "an impressive, prominent, and enthusiastic group." Systematic data collection has already begun on the performance of a sizable sample of schools and health clinics in the area. The CCC organized a half-day public workshop in January on corruption and transparency to introduce their program.

In addition to helping organize CCCs, the national headquarters have undertaken several programs. Most prominent is a major fact-finding exercise, an investigation of the workings of three key government watchdog agencies: the Bureau of Anti-Corruption, the Comptroller and Auditor General Office, and the Public Accounts Committee. A sophisticated news scan database designed to collect and analyze news articles is actively being used for data on 96 different sectors in Bangladesh. It was the basis for a major TIB report released in September on the impact of corruption in the education sector.

As one measure of success, donor confidence in TIB has grown and a consortium of donors (British DFID, the Norwegians, and Danish Danida) is planning a combined grant of \$5 million for expanded anti-corruption advocacy and social marketing.