

A Brief Report on Orientation Workshop for Surveyors – Jaipur, June 28-29, 2007

Background

Under the project titled ‘Combating Corruption in Rajasthan State, India, by Applying Right to Information (RTI) Act as a Tool’, CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS CART) organised a two days Orientation Workshop for selected surveyors on June 28-29, 2007 at Centre’s premises Bhaskar Marg, Bani Park, Jaipur.

Under the active support of the Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF), US, the project’s focus is on combating corruption through effective application of the RTI Act through citizen’s empowerment in Tonk and Jaipur districts respectively.

Under the project, a Field Survey has been planned for making a “Critical Analysis ” of the RTI Act along with certain other Acts and selected Citizen Charters, in order to assemble perceptions on corruption and know about its factual status; assessing level of understanding on above Acts and Charters of the common citizens, government officials, Community Based Organisations (CBOs) etc.

Objectives:

- To orient surveyors thoroughly in order to assemble responses of the common citizens and relevant persons about the issues mentioned in the questionnaire in an appropriate manner.
- To train how to make useful visits to selected government departments at divisional level for the purpose of conducting the questionnaire survey.
- To train on collection of adequate supporting data, data feeding in the questionnaire format and primary analysis of the data.
- To make them aware about their survey areas, samplings, time limitations etc for timely complete the survey.

Participants

Prior to the Orientation Workshop for filling of questionnaires and administering the Filed Survey, a careful selection of surveyors was done in operational area of the project. For that, the network of CUTS CART was used as a tool and besides that the Project Management Team (PMT) made regular visits in the field area and met with different stakeholders to get a feedback on the potential surveyors.

The key criteria for selecting the surveyors was their individual creditability in their respective area/localities, general understanding to identify corrupt practices, so far interventions in governance related issues, eagerness to reveal corruption in the society, fundamental knowledge/information about functioning of various service providing departments/agencies of the government and willingness to associate with CUTS CART, especially in its key programmatic area of “good governance”.

Besides the PMT and their senior colleagues from CUTS CART and primarily selected 14 surveyors from different blocks of the Jaipur and Tonk districts, Kavita Verma from the Department of Good Governance, Harish Chandra Mathur – Rajasthan Institute of Public Administration (HCM-RIPA) participated as Resource Person.

Proceedings:

Day One - June 28, 2007

Registration:

The invited participants were formally registered for the Orientation Workshop. During the registration session, participants discussed informally the work being done by them in their respective areas (geographical & thrust).

Inaugural Session

The Orientation Workshop commenced with welcome and introductory remarks by George Cheriyan of CUTS CART. After a brief introduction of CUTS International and its different Centres located in and outside the country, Cheriyan introduced the aims and objectives of the project by stating that “approach is not to use the project as a weapon against the government machinery but as a tool to curb corruption and related practices that ultimately assure a high degree of accountability in functioning of the government”.

Then Cheriyan introduced Kavita Verma to the audience and invited her to lead the technical session on ‘Right to Information and Good Governance’.

Technical Sessions

Kavita Verma began the technical session by explaining the role of “participatory approach” in good governance. She further explained some key characteristics of good governance i.e. accountability, transparency etc. She also explained the people’s accountability factor towards assuring good governance.

Next, she explained salient features of the RTI Act including definitions of various terms envisaged in the Act such “proactive disclosure”, “penalties” and process of getting information, duration for providing the requisite information to applicant, fees etc.

In order to ensure the internalisation of key provisions of the RTI Act by the participants, she presented certain examples of evoking the Act effectively. She also clarified the queries that were raised by the audience. In conclusion, she expressed her good wishes to the target audience for the success of Field Survey in their respective areas.

Taking an opportunity of the event, the audience requested Kavita Verma to release the first quarterly newsletter under the project titled, *Soochna Hi Shakti Hai* (Information is Power). The newsletter was distributed amongst the audience, which they find it very useful.

Following the technical *session*, Ajnish Bishwas and Siba Prasad from CUTS CART jointly took sessions on the *Lokayukta* Act 1973, Anti Corruption Act 1988 and Citizens Charters that have been selected for Critical Analysis under the project.

Ajnish Bishwas and Siba Prasad explained the legal remedies to combat corruption as well as how to evoke them as and when required. They clarified various queries that were raised by the participants during the session. After the conclusion of the session, the participants were invited for lunch.

In post lunch session, R K Sharma presented a detail overview of the project. He explained the methodologies/techniques that have to be applied while conducting the Field Survey, which included identifying appropriate interviewees, how to approach them in a convincing manner, the tone and tenor while asking questions etc.

The participants were thoroughly oriented on the draft questionnaire that has been developed by CUTS CART, including explanation of each question with its relevance, its sequence etc.

Following that the surveyors were divided into two groups: one group as “interviewer” and the other as “interviewee”. This practical exercise was done as a rehearsal of the Field Survey and field test of the questionnaire also in order to develop confidence amongst the surveyors for asking questions on sensitive issues such as “prevailing corruption in different department of the government”.

After this exercise, the surveyors were assembled again and were asked to share their feelings/observations while practicing the rehearsal and also to suggest suitable changes/amendment, if any. Further, the draft questionnaire was modified by incorporating the valuable suggestions from the surveyors, along with a briefing of the day-long proceeding. At this, the workshop concluded for its first day.

Day Two - June 29, 2007

3.4 Recap of Previous Day:

The second day of the Orientation Workshop started with quick recap of the activities of day one. The participants were very enthusiastic towards the Field Survey, and in addition to their previous day’s suggestions, they provided a few more good suggestions that emerged out of their collective informal discussion they had after the formal conclusion the Orientation Workshop.

These suggestions were mainly for the Part B of the questionnaire that is being developed exclusively for the government officials representing different departments.

Group Exercise

After being grouped into two, the target group was assigned with the task for practicing the modified questionnaire. Finally, a detail collective discussion by involving the PMT took place and various other necessary modalities for the Field Survey were discussed and explained to the surveyors.

Each surveyor was assigned with a particular block where she/he has to conduct the survey, the duration in which the task has to accomplish, as per budget and also the numbers of forms were fixed for each block. For details, please see

CGCC Formation Process

An encouraging development also took place on day two of the Orientation Workshop when the surveyors shown interest in joining the Consortium of Groups Combating Corruption (CGCC). Not only that, they assured to motivate a few more active groups/individuals to associate with the CGCC and also the citizens in their respective area/localities to file applications in different departments under the purview of the RTI Act.

On this the PMT briefed the surveyors on maintaining systematic records of applications that would be filed in from their area. However, the process of CGCC formation was started prior to organisation of the Orientation Workshop. With that, a vote of thanks followed by lunch, the Orientation Workshop was concluded.

Outcomes

- Creation of awareness about the project and ensuring their active association for the successful accomplishment of the project activities
- Forming a better understanding on RTI Act, *Lokayukta* Act 1973, Anti Corruption Act 1988 and Citizens Charters in coherence with the “accountability” and “good governance” factors;

- Ensuring not only an effective field survey but also facilitating collection of citizens' and government officials' perceptions, including essential ground level primary data that will be used as a key inputs for an impressive Critical Analysis
- The coverage of the event in media will further strengthen the ties with them and also draw the attention of the policy makers to think about more measures that could help defeat corruption.