



Journey for Advancement in Transparency, Representation and Accountability (JATRA)

CARE Bangladesh is implementing the Journey for Advancement in Transparency, Representation and Accountability (JATRA) project. The project aims to strengthen the Union Parishads' (Lowest tier of local government) public finance management systems so that they are more transparent and aligned with the Local Government Act 2009. The project endeavors to ensure active participation of the community leaders, especially women, in key decision making spaces and bodies. Moreover, JATRA strives to allow the wider community to play an active role in social accountability mechanisms to ensure inclusive democratic processes, equal access to quality services and access to accurate information at all levels of Union Parishad.

Political Economy Analysis is useful for equitable resource allocation at Kashiram Belpukur Union

Kashiram Belpukur is one of the unions of the JATRA project in Saidpur upazilla of Nilphamari district. It was not under the intervention of any CARE project earlier. In July, the first exercise to be conducted after the inception workshop was Political Economy Analysis with the participation of all of the Union Parishad representatives, civil society organizations, citizens from marginalized areas, and Natural leaders (Local leaders emerged from community mobilization process) from all of the respective wards of the union. The exercise included the construction of a large map drawn in the UP complex.

After the exercise the chairman, Anamul Haq Chowdhury, was amazed with the findings, as the resources and provision of the services of each ward were spread out, providing a greater scenario of vulnerability and poverty. The exercise also revealed a picture of sanitation coverage, availability and non-availability of services related to education, health, agriculture and livestock by ward. It also provided a scenario of infrastructurally rich areas and many more issues on disparities and exclusion.

Usually, ward members determine development issues from Ward Shava (Formal citizen meeting with elected UP representatives). In a number of wards they don't even take place and ward members independently decide the development issues for the

fiscal year. Usually, after the ward shava a budget coordination meeting is called for the prioritization of issues. The chairman is always confronted with difficulties in the prioritization and finalization of programs proposed from the wards. The ward members usually have good knowledge of their respective wards and do not have comprehensive overview of the whole union. There is always a competition between members to claim that their respective wards need the most resource allocation. The finalization of priorities by ward always becomes chaotic. It has also been impossible for each ward member to feel satisfied with the final decision. Consequently, poor hamlets and weak ward members are deprived of the mobilization of required resources; therefore addressing the horizontal fiscal disparity was a challenge for the UP chairman.

Now, the exercise has revealed a comparative picture of the union, providing the chairman substantial analytical explanations to consciously decide where to allocate more resources and why. The chairman stated that he will review the 5 year plan with ward members and enrich the plan with the findings. The chairman expressed that he has seen lots of maps in his life, but never found such an insightful and useful analysis in his life.

