



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.



A successful Ward Shava in Magura Union

'We never got the opportunity to talk about ourselves so openly that we have in the Ward Shava (Formal citizen meeting with elected UP representatives) today, we never knew that there were ward committees or supervision committees' cited one of the poor citizens in the ward shava. Magura is a remote and poor union of Kishoregonj Upazila in Nilphamari district. The union has an agriculture dominant economy, and large numbers of people work in labor, even women sale labor in agriculture. In the last week of February 2015, a ward shava was organized in ward 8. It was different to the conventional type of ward shava, usually occurs with a small group of 150 to 200 people. The chairman and members talked about the union's development agendas in the meeting and people listened.

This year, Natural leaders (Local leaders emerged from community mobilization process) and the Citizen Forum (Project supported community group who engages in democratic dialogue with UP for interest of poor and marginalized) mobilized people into the community to participate, invited guest including the Upazila chairman, Upazila Nirbahi Officer, police officer in charge, and district facilitator of LGSP-II (Local Government Support Project) project to increase its effectiveness. The ward shava was congregated with nearly 800 people from different professions, with a prevalence of women and extreme poor.

Project details about the ward shava as a democratic forum that can be learnt from include its importance in claiming rights, placing schemes of community priority, obtaining information on safety net programs and making local authorities responsive to what they commit. The citizens raised

their needs, asked the authorities questions, and the authorities also responded to the citizens. 15 issues were raised to the authorities to be included in the budget cycle including infrastructure construction, the reduction of violence against women, training for the poor, sanitation, safety nets, education, irrigation and the environment.

At the end of the event the UP chairman, Mr. Mojahar Hossain said 'now the powerful days of the chairman have gone, where the chairman takes the sole decision and lead the work, now the people are in the forefront. The people are giving us the demand, forming committee to execute the projects, judging our performance, and the chairman is becoming only a signing authority'.

The Upazila chairman, Md. Rashidul Islam of Kishoregonj said, 'I never knew people could speak out and their demands were taken for implementation, I never saw such union. It is a good initiative, and budget should reflect people's demands'. He committed to the citizens that he will donate school bench for Khiralgong primary school."

The officer in charge of police Md. Mostafijur Rahman said 'people can do great work, if they want they can solve all the problems, if anyone needs help, he will be at their side.' He extended his assistance to reduce any violence against women and early marriage to girls.

The Upazila Nirbahi officer, Md. Siddiqur Rahman said 'if people work together to raise their own demands, then it is easy to work for them and unity in work can also reduce corruption'. He committed to enroll all the beggars in the ward into a rehabilitation program, and make the ward beggar free.