Integrity Pledge:
Participatory Governance through Social Accountability

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The Integrity Pledge (IP) is a micro level social accountability process introduced by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) to promote participatory and accountable governance at the level of service delivery by a voluntary engagement of stakeholders. As a legally non-binding social contract, it is an innovation that involves voluntary engagement of the local level public representatives, officials and service providers with the service recipients and other citizens to promote transparency and accountability at the delivery of services in vital sectors such as education, health and local government.

Introduced in local level institutions of public service delivery, the IP has built-in process of application and monitoring. "Integrity Pact", the generic version of the Integrity Pledge has been working in different variations with varying degrees of success in many other countries around the world since it was introduced by Transparency International to promote accountability primarily in public procurement. The IP, as introduced by TIB is a social accountability tool that involves a written but voluntary commitment signed by stakeholders – public representatives, officials and other service providers, informal groups of people as service recipients and citizens' committees - where all parties make a pledge to work together and help each other to:

- prevent and control abuse of power for private gain;
- eliminate all forms of unauthorized payments, including bribery for services rendered;
- ensure and promote participation of service recipients in decisions that affect the content and quality of services provided;
- ensure transparency in public contracts and in implementing work under such contracts; and
- promote disclosure and transparency to ensure accountability in all related actions.

The Process Leading to IP

The IP is essentially a stage of social accountability reached in a process built through a number of steps and tools. These are:

Citizens Report Cards (CRC)

The CRC is a tool to measure the degree of satisfaction of service recipients about the content and quality of service provided by a selected institution, particularly in education, health and local government. The findings of the CRC are released usually with the participation of the authority which serves the twin purpose of
wider public information and awareness as well as engagement with the authority in efforts for follow-up initiatives.

Advice & Information
TIB has introduced a mobile advice and information service titled AI-Desk, usually provided to the service recipients in the premises of the relevant institution. Another complementary process in this connection is the street theatre and other cultural tools. The primary objective is to equip the service recipients with the information that helps challenge the prospect that corruption can be taken as a way of life.

Participatory Budget
Wider and freer disclosure of budgetary information helps higher levels of accountability, which, in turn, can help expedite the poverty reduction process. Participation of the beneficiaries of development efforts as stakeholders makes the budget more appropriate, transparent, accountable and effective. Participatory and open budget, budget tracking and monitoring with the participation of the service recipients are key element in the build up as well as follow-up on the IP.

Face the Public (FTP)
The FTP is a forum for the public representatives, officials and other service providers to respond to questions and demand directly raised by the members of the public in general and service recipients in particular, especially with respect to the commitments made as well as the content and quality of the range of services provided by the selected institution. Depending on the institution FTPs vary in modes, processes and participation. In schools, for instance, mothers are the key participants in the forum called Mothers Gathering whereas in the local government body members of the general public take part as stakeholders. By August 2012, IPs have been signed in 27 selected institutions in total in education, health and local government sectors, of which 12 are primary schools, 1 is an education board, 3 are hospitals and 11 are local government bodies.

Signing the Integrity Pledge
It is in a process of build up through the above process complemented by a series of consultations and engagements between the stakeholders that eventually the IP is signed. The whole process is catalyzed by the Committees of Concerned Citizens (CCC) set up by TIB as local level citizens’ watchdog forums as a part of its civic engagement in the social movement against corruption. Working on a fully voluntary basis, the CCCs are assisted by the YES (Youth Engagement and Support) groups, who also work on a fully voluntary basis.

Substantive Elements of the IP

a) IPs in Local Government
Parties to the IP: a) The authority (public representatives), b) service recipients (citizens), and c) Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC):

By signing the IP, the authority (the first party) commits to:

a. Abide by the laws and regulations (especially the Union Parishad Act 2009), be sincere in fulfilling the election commitments;

b. Refrain from corruption and bribery and take all measures to reduce the same in the relevant jurisdiction;

c. Ensure people's access to information and to proactively disclose information.

d. Assess and acknowledge the fundamental development requirements of the community and make efforts to meet the same.

e. Ensure transparency, accountability and integrity in all development efforts it will undertake.

f. Engage the community in the planning process of development activities and take into account their suggestions and disclose all information related to such activities.

g. Maintain highest level of integrity and transparency in all its financial transactions and will proactively share all information with the community members.
h. Arrange open budget sharing programmes and maintain highest level of transparency in this regard. The budget will take into account suggestions of the community members and due importance will be given to their needs and priorities.

i. Facilitate periodic budget tracking and regular social audit of all financial transactions.

j. Observe existing rules and regulations to ensure highest level of transparency in all procurements. Arrange monitoring of the procurement process by citizens committee members.

k. Ensure honesty, transparency and accountability in the distribution of VGF, VGD, Senior Citizen Allowance, Freedom Fighters Allowance, humanitarian relief and other safety net allowances provided by the government. Eliminate all forms of unethical practices including nepotism, favouritism and partisan political consideration in the management and distribution of such services.

l. Create conducive conditions for better coordination among all departments/offices within the jurisdiction and to ensure all offices, both government and non-government are run with efficiency and integrity without any partisan political bias.

m. Shalish (arbitrations) will be done transparently, fairly, objectively and without any bias for or against any one.

n. Take all possible measures to facilitate improved health service for the community with special attention to the poor and disadvantaged.

o. Make best efforts to tackle social problems such as child marriage, dowry system and also strictly deal with theft, robbery and other social crimes.

p. Regularly organize Face the Public programs to monitor and review the progress of implementation of the IP and to ensure their accountability.

By signing the IP the service recipients/citizens (the second party) commit to:

a. Assist the authority (first party) in all its activities and will provide them with advice and suggestion.

b. Actively engage and work with the authority with the spirit of cooperation to implement the IP.

By signing the IP the CCC (the third party) commits to:

a. Provide technical support to the first party and help them to build their capacity.

b. Help the first party to ensure transparency, accountability and thus reduce corruption in the community.

c. Coordinate activities of all parties and advise to improve the quality of enforcement of the IP.

b) The IP in Primary Education

By signing the IP the School Management Committee (First Party) commits to:

a. Make sure that all children over the age of 6 in their catchment area attend the school. A list of the students will be maintained and regularly updated.

b. Refrain from corruption and bribery and take all measures to reduce the same in the relevant jurisdiction;

c. Maintain the highest possible standard of education in the school within the given resources.

d. Ensure transparency in any procurements including all development work of the school and engage/inform the community members about it on a regular basis.

e. Disclose and display all information about stipend and other financial provisions make these readily available for all.

f. Engage the community members in all activities of the school.

g. Mobilize all necessary support and help form the relevant governmental bodies e.g., the Thana Education Office, Union Parishod etc.

h. Take all measures to ensure regular attendance of students and good results in examinations.

i. Regularly consult with the students and their parents regularly to improve the standard of education.

j. Arrange proper sanitation and drinking water facilities for the students.

k. Arrange regular ‘Mothers Gathering’ to ensure transparency, responsiveness and accountability.
By signing the IP the guardians and the community (the second party) commit to:

a. Work with the SMC in the spirit of cooperation and provide them with support and advice to ensure quality education and transparency and accountability in the management of the affairs of the school.

b. Remain vigilant about all expenditures and make sure that school resources are used and managed properly.

By signing the IP the CCC (the third party) commits to:

a. Provide technical support to the first and second party and help them to build capacity and ensure integrity, transparency and accountability of the school management system.

b. Coordinate activities of all parties and advise to improve the quality of implementation of the IP.

c. Ensure that all public examinations that it conducts are credible and acceptable to people;

d. Take necessary measures so that all schools and colleges under the Board will be run maintaining a standard procedure which will ensure quality education for the students;

e. Ensure that the Board employees shall not take part in any bidding process which may benefit them directly or indirectly or in any other form. The employees will not also play the role of mediator in any part of the procurement process. In giving services to its clients, the employees shall not take any financial or any other benefits or resort to corrupt practices. The Board will take all measures to prevent corruption in these processes;

f. Enforce the Right to Information Act of 2009 and proactively disclose information to people. It will also update its records and disclose them when demanded and will also take steps to proactively disclose all information it holds; and

g. Introduce the e-Governance system.

By signing the IP the Service recipients, Bidders, Contractors (the third party) have committed to:

a. Ensure that while receiving services from the first party no corrupt practices are resorted to;

b. Assist the Board in ensuring services according to the Citizens Charter.

c. Bidders and Contractors will not pay bribe to the Board authority (or any of the family members/friends of any of the Board's employee) while taking part in any procurement process.

By signing the IP the CCC, Rajshahi (the third party) has committed to:

a. Advise the first party on a regular basis in improving its services and the quality of education of the divisional area.

b. Work as a watchdog and monitoring body in ensuring transparency, accountability and integrity of all parties and ensure people's participation in it. The Monitoring and Evaluation team from CCC shall have the right and access to all related information.

c) Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education, Rajshahi:

Parties to the Pledge: a) the Board authority; b) the service recipients, bidders and contractors; c) Committee of Concerned citizens, Rajshahi.

By signing the IP the Board authority (the first party) has committed to:

a. Ensure transparency, accountability and integrity so that its service recipients are not harassed or become victims of irregularities or corruption;

b. Refrain from corruption and bribery and take all measures to reduce the same in the relevant jurisdiction;

c. Enforce the Citizens Charter;

d. Ensure that all public examinations that it conducts are credible and acceptable to people;
All parties agreed that complaints/objections/grievances have to be placed before the Board first and can only be made public if they are not addressed by them.

**d) IPs in Local Health Complexes:**

Parties to the IP: a) The Health Complex authority, b) service recipients (citizens), and c) Committee of Concerned Citizens (CCC):

By signing the IP, the hospital authority (the first party) commits to:

a. Ensure strict attendance of physicians, nurses and other staff in the regular working hours as per rule as well as uninterrupted services and presence for emergency support.

b. Make necessary arrangements to admit patients who require it. If the hospital authority is unable to admit a patient with critical condition and which is beyond the authority’s capacity to treat because of lack of facilities at the hospital, then the patient should be referred to a better facility as early as possible. The hospital authority should also ensure primary/first-aid services to such patients.

c. Provide/make legal arrangements/supports for patients who require it after being properly treated.

d. Display lists with information on services provided, different tests and fees where applicable, available medicines and doctors on duty in various wards/departments.

e. Ensure availability of all care-giving and support staff and administrative officials according to government rules.

f. Provide entry tickets to patients at the outdoor departments at fixed rate without unauthorized payments.

g. Provide money receipt to service recipients for all kinds of financial transactions.

h. Provide free medicines based on supplies.

i. Help poor and deserving patients to receive financial assistance from the Department of Social Services.

j. Set up information desk and complain & suggestions box including provision for reviewing those jointly by the signing parties.

k. Initiate measures to make convenient waiting arrangements for women, children and patients with disability at the outdoor departments.

l. Make arrangement for safe drinking water, clean and disinfected environment.

m. Make arrangements for separate clean toilets for male and female users.

n. Make arrangements for specialists physicians for indoor patients who require special care.

o. Designate visiting hours for sales representatives from pharmaceutical companies and ensure strict compliance.

p. Eliminate presence of middlemen at the hospital premises and stop all kinds of harassments of patients including diversion to private clinics, hospitals, diagnostic centres.

q. Arrange regular ‘Face the Public’ for the hospital authority to listen to, and take action against, direct complains and suggestions of the service recipients, and disclose information regarding the hospital’s development activities, budget allocations & financial records, quality of services and various limitations etc.
By signing the IP service recipients (the second party) commit to:

a. Take initiatives to build a positive relationship between caregivers and receivers.
b. Assist the authority for the proper utilisation of limited hospital resources, disclosure of financial records to ensure transparency and accountability.
c. Stand by the first party and accept the duty of acting as the third party’s representative in order to solve any problems in the hospital or to improve the quality of services.
d. Maintain regular communications with the hospital staff.
e. Assist the first party to solve any problem at the hospital that is within their capacity.

By signing the IP the CCC (the third party) commits to:

a. Play the bridging role between the first and second party; provide advice, information and other supports to both first and second parties in order to ensure integrity, transparency and accountability at the services of the hospital and also to ensure the proper usage of resources.
b. Monitor progress and implementation status of IP and provide recommendations accordingly.
c. Take steps to facilitate disclosure of information to the public regarding the services provided by the hospital authority.
e. Negotiate and engage with the local health authority (including Civil Surgeon) so as to develop the recognition of the IP and its ownership.

Enforcement & Monitoring

All parties agree on the following to ensure enforcement and monitoring of the IP:

- Collectively develop action plan to implement commitments;
- Hold regular meetings between the parties to assess and monitor progress;
- Set up information boards (services delivered, rates of payment, progress on development work etc.);
- Activate all standing committees in LG/School Management Committees;
- Continue with the open and participatory budget and budget tracking;
- Regular holding of the Face the Public/Mothers’ Gathering;
- Disclose all information in accordance with the Right to Information Act; and
- Work in partnership with other local relevant stakeholders, especially in close engagement with the administration.

Indicators of Results

**Local Government**
- Unauthorized payments for services controlled
- Improved quality of services
- Fair, transparent and unbiased distribution of safety nets - VGD/VGF, humanitarian relief, senior-citizens allowance, birth/death registration, fertilizer delivery, trade license issue and renewal, drinking water supply and Shalish
- Corruption in procurement, construction reduced
- Standing Committees activated
- Accountable use of budget
- People are empowered & demand change
- Public representatives and officials commit to engage, stakes and ownership developed

**Primary Schools**
- Unauthorized payments stopped
- Scholarship distribution fair and transparent
- Fair and transparent textbook distribution
- SMCs reformed and activated
- Improved rights awareness, especially mothers
- Authorities more aware of anomalies, and committed to act
- Teachers’ performance improved - time-keeping, discipline
- Drop-out reduced, enrolment increased
- Improved results in examinations
- Private tuition reduced
- Teachers, SMCs, officials and guardians engaged
Health Complexes

- Harassments of patients reduced
- Available medicines and other services are distributed/sold without any unauthorized payments
- Hospital authorities are more vigilant
- Doctors, nurses and other hospital staff are available as due, and more sincere to their duties
- The hospital compound, wards, cabins, beds, and toilets remain clean
- No additional charges for services and medical tests
- No deliberate and exploitative diversion of patients to private clinics, hospitals and diagnostic centres
- Regular meetings (Face the Public) with patients are held
- List of medicines, duty rosters of doctors/nurses displayed
- Extortion in entrance for tickets stopped
- Collection of unauthorized payments for ambulance & other services stopped
- Food quality and content for indoor patients improved
- Undue presence of representatives of pharmaceuticals in doctors’ chambers stopped
- Key health personnel (Civil Surgeon) reform oriented

The Integrity Pledge: Challenges

All parties to the IP believe that successful implementation will generate further interest, ownership and thereby more effective enforcement with the scope of further replication and up-scaling. On the other hand failure in proper implementation and monitoring leading to lower than expected level of results will jeopardize the whole process. The main challenges of the IP are:

a) Limits to possible changes are determined by the level of the given resources and capacities at the level of the concerned institution. Higher levels of success will depend on supportive policy and institutional change as well as necessary resource allocation from the national level.

b) The IP being conceptually built on participation, any shortfall in ensuring it, especially of the service recipients, mainly poor and disadvantaged, will be severely damaging.

c) The instrument and the process are built on voluntary participation of all stakeholders. Hence erosion of volunteerism will jeopardize the prospect of its success.

d) The process through which the IPs have come into being is a learning by doing. Much would depend therefore on the skills and capacities of the stakeholders to successfully enforce it.

e) Like any other social accountability tool, the IP is a legally non-binding instrument with no scope of legal redress in case of violation by any of the parties involved. Therefore, the key to its success is the continued commitment and ownership of all stakeholders supported by favourable political will and administrative support.
Corruption increases poverty & injustice, let's fight it together, now…

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