



[M-SCORE: PROMOTING VOICE AND RIGHTS OF VULNERABLE GROUPS IN VIETNAM]

VIETNAM: THE M-SCORE

Mobile Phone Scorecards improve public service quality and control corruption in Quang Tri province, Vietnam

Public administration services in Vietnam are often slow and inefficient. Oxfam developed in Quang Tri province an innovative mobile phone scorecard tool: The M-Score. This tool enables citizens to score the performance of the public administration service via mobile phone and ensures their feedback is recorded and responded to.

There have been encouraging results. One inspiring results is the decreased number of reported bribery cases and a plan to improve the quality of public service in the 2016 Resolution of the People's Council of Quang Tri.

IMPROVING QUALITY OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Public administration services in Vietnam, such as applying for land-use right certificates, acquiring personal documents like birth certificates or registering a business, are often slow and inefficient. Both citizens and businesses often experience delays, non-transparent procedures and requests for bribes from local officials.

According to the Viet Nam Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI) survey, most applicants received the paperwork they requested within 30 days after applying for it. However, the length of time varied greatly, ranging from just one day to almost two years. A third of the people surveyed also said that bribes were needed to obtain a land-use right certificate. Echoing this, an Oxfam baseline survey in Quang Tri province in 2014 found that 33 out of 435 citizens had paid a bribe of \$20 to \$300 for public administration services.

A CITIZEN SCORECARD TOOL

In response to this, Oxfam and its partners developed an innovative mobile phone scorecard tool (M-Score) which is the first of its kind in Vietnam to enable citizens to score the performance of the public administration service they have just received via their mobile phone. The so-called M-Score enables citizens to score the performance of public administration services via their mobile phone. The tool allows citizens to voice their experience and helps local governments to monitor public administrative services, providing information that can help to improve the quality, transparency and accountability of these services.

To develop the tool, international experience in similar area were used, and lessons learnt from domestic major surveys such as the Provincial Competitiveness Index (PCI) and the Provincial Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI).

With Vietnamese Government's determination on public administration reform, there is a great potential for M-Score to be replicated and scaled up in other localities or other areas of public service delivery, such as education and health care. The aim is for M-Score to be employed by the Government and rolled out nationwide by 2018.

Oxfam's role is to promote linkage among the wide range of actors and carry out efforts to influence for change. Oxfam makes sure that different research and government partners collaborate with each other to achieve shared objectives, and at the same time provides technical inputs. Oxfam monitors project activities, collects evidence for project expansion, and connects to potential donors.

HOW THE SCORECARD WORKS

In areas where M-Score is used, a record is made of citizens' mobile phone numbers when they are in touch with a local public administration office. Once the administrative procedure is completed, citizens are interviewed over the phone by an independent body on the quality of the service they received, how

much time they had to spend to complete it and whether they had to pay a bribe. The survey data is then analysed by a research organisation.

Every quarter a report is published that includes the most recent data and a series of recommendations from local people and stakeholders. Events are held to announce and share the results with the provincial government, media and citizens, and to start a discussion on how public administration services can be improved.

As part of M-Score, a hotline number has also been set up. Citizens can call the number to track the status of their documents, thereby saving time and money by only having to visit the local administration office once the documents are ready. In addition, citizens can use the hotline to provide feedback on the quality of the public services they have received.

Provincial television and newspaper actively and regularly provide information about M-Score and updates on the results so local people have a proper understanding about objectives of M-Score and become more open to share their feedback and recommendation as well. In addition, these organizations use cases from the survey for case studies and reports.

Publishing public ranking and feedbacks creates strong incentive and pressures for improvements in public service. At the same time, these feedbacks are collected through an independent and professional agency which their principles are keeping customers' confidentiality and technical-wise.

Monitoring and constructive feedbacks from citizens provides service providers and local governments with objective assessments of the strength and weakness for improvements of their services. When civil servants know that their performance will be monitored and ranked, they will reduce and stop poor and corruptive behaviours.

Meanwhile the public's ranking of service quality among services providers in the province incentivize local governments and service providers to improve in their performance in order to increase the ranking. With follow-up with cases provided by the survey and hotlines, and with creating objective mechanism, people gradually trust the project and participate better.

RESULTS

From April to December 2015, the survey reached 3,560 people, accounting for 42% of total people having their papers processed. During the first 3 months of 2016, 90% participated in the telephone survey, increasing 3 times in comparison with the previous 6 months. Thousands of comments have been contributed by people in order to improve services quality. The number of reported bribery cases has decreased significantly. Compared with 1 in every 13 in the baseline survey, only 1 in every 32 citizens reported they had to pay a bribe from June to August 2015, and 1 in every 46 for the first eight months of 2016.

“The number of reported bribery cases has decreased significantly”

A mechanism for the service users to give feedbacks and for the local authorities to respond was established via telephone survey system as well as the hotline 1800-8081. By August 2016 100% of people claimed through the hotline were followed-up and solved by the local authority. In order to report timely and effectively with cases through hotline, the hotline now was managed by the Peoples Council office-one of project stake-holders, instead of outsourcing as

before. A team with research expertise and local language ability has been recruited to enhance the quality the surveys.

Thirdly, the implementation of the M-Score project was an incentive factor stimulating the positive changes in human resource, equipment and facilities upgrading, increase in the quality of service of the local authorities, issuance of organizing and operating rules at some one-stop shops of Quang Tri Province. Improving quality of these shops was included in the 2016 resolution of the People's Council as an action points following up M-Score survey. In addition, thanks to M-Score tool, staff at different departments at one-stop shops changed their working behaviour by actively cooperated with each other in order to facilitate local people's work. This has not ever happened before. More qualified staff have also been assigned to one-stop shops.

The fourth impact was that the project supported the People's Council of Quang Tri province in monitoring administration procedure, especially in one-stop shops mechanism. Monitoring trips have been carried out regularly by the People Council in several districts. Monthly updates have helped district People's Committees to give timely guidance to one-stop shops to deal with difficult cases as well as to give warnings and pressure to the ones that have a delayed process.

Lastly, the project helped the provincial management authorities realize the necessity of modernization of one-stop shops and recommends some solutions for building modern one-stop shops at districts of the province. The successful pilot of information technology application at district level has resulted in a plan of Quang Tri People's Committee to roll out the new software at various provincial departments and publish information and data transparently on the official website of the province.

Since 2016 the scorecard model has been replicated in the health sector in Quang Tri with the participation of 5 hospitals aiming at improving the quality of health services which currently have a lot of public concern. The project was also well received by the neighboring province of Quang Binh. By August 2016 nearly 4,500 people in Quang Binh have provided feedback on the quality of service they received. There is a high potential to expand the project to other localities as authorities of Ha Tinh, Nghe An and Ha Noi have shown interest in the project model.

The aim is for M-Score to be employed by the Government and rolled out nationwide by 2018.

LESSONS LEARNED

- People's trust is one of the success factors of the project. Respect what was promised and committed to people are crucial. Specifically in M-Score, survey results need to be made public and transparent to all stake holders including local people and need to be followed up with specific action points. At the same time, personal data of information providers need to keep confidential and only be disclosed with people's consent.
- M-Score's initial success is based on two factors: (i) it comes on time when local government and people need the tool; (ii) province's and districts leaders are advanced, passionate and committed with solutions and actions for peoples' benefits.

“Three out of four people who made a claim through the hotline were followed-up and their case was solved by the local authority”

“Staff at different departments at one-stop shops changed their working behaviour by actively cooperated with each other in order to facilitate local people's work”

- It is not always easy to coordinate a wide range of actors/stakeholders and go for shared objectives. Oxfam once had decided to replace one stakeholder as they were not at the level of sharing the same approach and project strategy. It is challenging, but on the other hand, interesting to figure out new partnership and learn from this process.

SIX MONTHS AND TWELVE DAYS - HOW A FAMILY GOT THEIR LAND USE CERTIFICATE ISSUED

Mr. Le Phuoc Tho, 56 and his wife, 52, live in Dong Ha City, Quang Tri Province. After years of saving they were able to buy a piece of land in Ward 3, Dong Ha City in 2003. They were granted a Land Use Certificate (LUC) with only Mr. Tho's name as the land user. The LUC also contained some error in cadastral measurements. Later the new Land Law stipulates that "In cases where the land use rights constitute the common property of the husband and the wife, the land use right certificates must be inscribed clearly with the full names of both the husband and the wife.

Mr. Tho and his wife wished their LUC to be modified with both their names and the correct cadastral measurements. They were however aware of how time-consuming and complicated it would be to do paper work at public administration offices. Only until May 2015 did Mr. Tho decide to submit his application for LUC modification. He came to the administration service office called "one-stop shop" of Dong Ha City to lodge his application. According to Quang Tri People's Committee's decision on administration procedures, it would have taken him just twelve days to obtain a modified LUC. However almost six months had passed and the procedures were not completed. Officers of the "one-stop shop" directed him to the Notary Office to get his papers certified while officers of the Notary Office refused to do so. He went back and forth many times without knowing clearly what the problem was. Each time he was instructed differently.

He got so tired and disappointed about the process then one day he received a telephone call from someone saying she was from M-Score. She explained to him what M-Score was and asked him to give feedback about the quality of the service provided by the one-stop-shop. He was very surprised at first because he had never thought an ordinary citizen like him would ever have a chance to comment about public services. He feared his feedback would be recorded and it would later cause him troubles. But the officer explained to him so patiently that he realised his comments might help improve the situation. Then he shared his disappointment and gave a low score for the service quality.

His case was also covered by Quang Tri Television, a partner of M-Score. A series of follow up reportages were aired in the following weeks. Through M-Score other people who had to deal with procedures on land also gave a low ranking for public administration services of Dong Ha City. The People's Committee (PC) of Dong Ha city was informed of their low public ranking on land issues. The PC requested the "one-stop-shop" and the Department of Natural Resources and Environment to work together and find a solution.

In early November 2015 Mr. Tho and his wife were invited to the "one-stop-shop" to complete all the forms with the support of functional officers. Twelve days later, they were granted a new LUC. It was hardly for Mr. Tho and his wife to believe they could get their LUC in such a short time.

Citizen's feedback has helped Dong Ha authorities to realise gaps in their service on land administration procedures. As a result the Department of Natural Resources and Environment decided to reallocate its human resource to provide better service. Comments from citizens about the one-stop-shop have been more and more positive recently.



Mr. Le Phuoc Tho and his wife happily showed their new Land Use Certificate

"I have realised the great impact of M-Score. It has helped improve the working attitude of the one-stop shop's officers. M-score has contributed to reforming and changing the public administration system of Quang Tri province."

- Mr Tho



Report made by
Quang Tri Television:

ABOUT

The project contributes to the achievement of Oxfam's Change Goal "Right To Be Heard" which is focused on ensuring that all citizens have increased access to information and feel confident about raising their voice and that citizens have greater opportunities to influence decisions that shape their lives and are able to hold the government accountable.

Our new way of working is clearly reflected with the involvement of multi stakeholders which include provincial People's Council, university, research institute and private sector. Oxfam plays the role of promoting linkage among the wide range of actors and carrying out efforts to influence for change.

READ ON

In this section you can add links to websites, articles, reports, presentations.

- Animation video – by Đoàn Tuấn Anh: English subtitle:
<https://youtu.be/VZuLuTgZx4A>
- One year implementation of Quang Tri province:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7m4Si3-_mJ8&feature=youtu.be
- Oxfam in Vietnam:
<https://vietnam.oxfam.org/m-score>

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