

I Paid a Bribe (IPAB)

in partnership with the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Network on Governance (GovNet)



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Organisation: Janaagraha

Country: India

Level of government: Local government

Sector: Public order and safety

Type: Communication, Digital, Methods

Launched in: 2010

Overall development time: 2 year(s)

Link to the innovation's website

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Description

I Paid A Bribe is a website portal where ordinary citizens in India can submit reports of corruption and bribes they have paid to obtain regular services in their daily lives.

The site lays emphasis on the various kinds of Retail Corruption. It crowdsources and compiles the actual bribe prices paid by individuals across the country and uses this information to track and present a snapshot of bribe trends in India.

Janaagraha acknowledges the role of government as well as citizens in anti-corruption efforts, and IPAB also educates people on resisting bribery through the informational content published on the website.

Why the innovation was developed

- Corruption has a huge economic cost in India. The fact that corruption creates wealth for a few through unjustified means erodes values and damages lives in many ways.
 - Corruption makes legitimate transactions more difficult by perpetuating mis-governance and destroying any incentive for the government to reduce red tape.
 - As long as systems and services are slow and convoluted, government officials and politicians can demand bribes from citizens to make lives easier.
 - Bribes create a system where distrust pervades everyday life, where citizens are suspicious of their government and the government is suspicious of citizens in turn.
 - The widespread manifestation of “petty” corruption breaks the spirit of ordinary people, who lose the will to fight against these injustices and get used to enduring bad service and paying bribes to procure them.
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Objectives

Enhance public trust, Enhance transparency, Improve effectiveness, Improve service quality, Improve social equity, Improve user satisfaction, Increase citizen engagement

- Increase awareness of everyday corruption by providing details and costs of bribes paid by citizens.
 - Educate public officials and citizens about corruption.
 - Reduce corruption in the delivery of public services.
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Main beneficiaries

Civil Society, General population, Government bodies, Government staff

- Citizens: providing access to information which helps them to avoid paying bribes.
 - Public officials: informing the government about bribe-prone service delivery areas.
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Existing similar practices

IPaidABribe (IPAB)

In the private sector, civil society or elsewhere

Other civil society organisations

In addition to ipaidabribe.com in Greece, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, South Africa, Ukraine, and Tunisia, Bribe Market is a similar initiative developed in Romania that allows citizens to share their experiences of bribery when interacting with public services including sharing information on the amount of money they had to pay.

This initiative was developed in 2012 thanks to the support of the Restart Challenges competition financed by TechSoup Global, the Central and Eastern European Trust for Civil Society, U.S. embassies and Microsoft. Within its first four months of existence, Bribe Market received nearly 650 reports of corruption. Reports are mapped to help people identify which service providers are the “cheapest” and the least corrupt (IACC, 2012).

<http://ipaidabribe.or.ke/>, <http://www.ipaidbribe.pk/>, <http://www.bribenigeria.com/i-paid-a-bribe/>, <http://www.paidabribe.org.zw>

Results

Service quality

Accessibility:

- Improving access to and ability to report information on bribes and corruption through the website and social media.

Other:

- Excellent levels of usage of the website showing higher awareness and publicity. For example, in October 2014 there were 30301 total reports, Rs. 2.36 billion (~USD 51 million) in total amount of bribes reported, 20214 bribes paid, 2553 bribe fighters, and 878 honest officers.
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User satisfaction

- There is evidence to suggest that the programme has a positive influence with 21 percent of users surveyed saying that they had avoided paying a bribe because of the knowledge gained through the portal. Overall, the general trend was positive, with only five percent of the respondents strongly disagreeing that the information provided through the website assists with avoiding bribery.

Development

Design

The ipaidabribe.com idea emerged and evolved over time. It commenced with a discussion between co-founders and board members of Janaagraha, a Bangalore based not-for-profit organisation, about the pernicious effect of corruption on destroying city life and disempowering citizens.

The original idea was that the website could become a simple means of tracking the market price of corruption - a kind of market price prediction mechanism. The initiative was conceptualized and implemented by Janaagraha, a Bangalore based not-for-profit organization to uncover 'the market price of corruption'.

A small experimental website was put up to test the idea. Over time, more features were added and the site was redesigned to be multifaceted, providing a variety of services to people. The new redesigned website was launched on August 15, 2010, India's Independence day.

The programme went through the stages of stakeholder analysis, a SWOT analysis, and how to link access to public information with governance reforms.

Testing

- A small experimental website was put up to test the concept. Over time, the idea was worked on extensively and more features were added, mainly to channel people's views and provide advisory services to them such as FAQs.
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Implementation

Tools used:

- A website has been created (using free, open-source software) to provide a mechanism for people to input and crowdsource information on bribes made.
- The data is analysed to understand corruption patterns, identifying why, how, and how much bribe money is asked by public officials.
- A Drupal content management system is used with a Linux, Apache, My SQL and PHP (LAMP) software bundle to build the web server for the I Paid A Bribe website.
- These software choices were made to accommodate Janaagraha's plan to centralize the databases of all their projects and programmes.

Resources used:

- Janaagraha provides continuous funding for I Paid A Bribe. The major expenses for the programme include maintaining the website, creating informational videos, arranging press conferences and employee salaries. The total operating costs for a financial year is estimated to be around INR 3.5 million (USD 77,777).
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Diffusion

- I Paid A Bribe (IPAB) produces reports advising citizens on ways to avoid bribes, and recommending corrective measures to the government to help eliminate corruption.
 - Janaagraha tries to raise the visibility of the project by circulating IPAB cartoons online, posting regular blogs and sending newsletters on corruption, campaigning to get signatures in support of the UN convention against corruption, and plans to continue these activities publishing content in five regional languages.
 - I Paid A Bribe (IPAB) uses social media to help promote the website, including Facebook (9000 followers), participate in discussions, receive feedback, and post content and messaging on anti-corruption.
 - Hold press conferences, media promotions, and roadshows across India, and produce posters to distribute in government offices.
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Challenges and solutions

- Legal liability: A platform provider is not legally liable for offensive information on the website if the content is published without any moderation. IPAB chose to function as a platform provider, and hence it does not edit the stories that visitors report. This not only reduces legal liabilities for Janaagraha, but also gains the users' trust from a belief that their reports will not be manipulated or misrepresented.
 - Anonymity of reporting: To ensure anonymous reporting, a software application is installed that automatically detects and deletes the names from the bribe stories. The software recognizes these names from an evolving list stored in an external database. However, this application is not applied to the reports submitted to highlight honest government officials. A second level of moderation is performed to assure the public that the data is credible. There are automatic alerts set up to warn any bribe payment report of more than INR 10 million (~ USD 222). The alert system gives the IPAB team the option of publishing or not publishing the report, making changes to the entry is not allowed. The team does retain the ability to delete any report found to be abusive.
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Partnerships

Omidyar Network, Dell Youth Learning, Infosys, Acacia Partners, Tata Tea, Times India

Other

The partners provided funding for the project.

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

- The key to success is to provide a number of related services to both the public and the government, and to constantly evolve new strategies to use communication services optimally for creating a swarm-like resistance to corruption.
 - In addition, it is not only important to provide a space for citizens to share and discuss, but also to educate them on the techniques of resisting corruption.
 - It is also important to work with the government, and to identify and utilise the people within the government who are willing to tackle corruption effectively by getting rid of red tape and simplifying procedures.
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Conditions for success

- Level of awareness of corruption and willingness to stand up to it.
 - Freedom of speech.
 - Widespread internet use.
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Other information

A collaboration policy has been prepared that can be offered to interested groups in other countries. So far, citizens and NGOs from 12 countries have approached Janaagraha for assistance.

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