Social Accountability Resulting in Improved Development Outcomes

"The adoption of social accountability approaches in South Asia is creating significant impact around the world", said Robert Chase, Lead Economist, South Asia Human Development, the World Bank in his inaugural address during the event 'Social Accountability in South Asia: Improving Development Outcomes' at New Delhi, on December 18, 2012 organised by CUTS in partnership with Affiliated Network on Social Accountability South Asia Region (ANSA SAR) under Community of Practice on Social Accountability (CoPSA).

Citing the example of Ethiopia, he said that now after exposure of Ethiopian delegation to South Asian social accountability (SAc) progress, 90 percent of districts of Ethiopia have posted their budget on to the website and 80 percent have feedback collection mechanism in place.

He further said that the exchange of knowledge on SAc through CoPSA has potential to add great value to the improvement of development outcomes. He also informed the audience that the World Bank has launched Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA) in Washington to support civil society in the SAc interventions. While sharing the experience of different organisations and SAc approaches, he stated that these could help all of us to improve the learning and development outcomes. Vibrant community of practice (CoP) such as CoPSA is very crucial. He congratulated CUTS for anchoring such an initiative in South Asia.

The event was organised to sensitise the government, media, donor agencies and civil society organisations (CSOs) to adopt and support on SAc approaches. It was attended by various representatives of donor and government agencies including Ministry of Rural Development, British High Commission, The World Bank, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) and several others. Representatives of CSOs working on SAc in India including Participatory Research in Asia, Centre for Civil Society, CHRI, LEAF Society, Unnati, Youth for Social Development (YSD), Samarthan, Sambandh, SEEDS and Pro Public Public from Nepal actively took part in the meeting.

Bhvana Bhatia, South Asia Regional Coordinator, the World Bank Institute,

mentioned that CoPSA played an important role to gather active people to be able to interact, which is key challenge for any CoP. She further spoke about various initiatives being taken up in the area of SAc. She also stated about the initiative of promoting knowledge exchange through ANSA and CoPs, capacity building of relevant stakeholders, engaging CSOs in the budget process to demystify it, motivating innovative practices and their documentation, use of information and communication technology and others. She spoke about CoPSA and e-learning for encouraging achievements.

In the opening remarks, George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS presented a brief overview of the evolution of CoPSA. He mentioned that SAc interventions can play a vital role in improving the public expenditure outcomes; this has been proved through several pilots implemented by several organisations in various parts of South Asia and outside. He stated that even less than one percent of total budget for introducing accountability mechanism can surprisingly improve the development outcomes.

The government and other agencies of development want to strengthen the impact of its development efforts by improving accountability at various levels of development process. Engaging citizens in the process from project design to outcome assessment has been constantly bringing better outcomes by ensuring transparency and accountability. This approach called 'SAc' has been found very successful in several interventions made by CSOs. This has motivated the government in the adoption of the approach in several government mega schemes, such as social audit in National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, community-based monitoring in National Rural Health Mission, school health and management committees.

The inaugural session was followed by the technical session, in which four case studies were presented and moderated by George Cheriyan. First case was presented by Bibhu Prasad Sahu, Secretary, YSD based on the innovative approach of citizen monitoring used in *Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna* rural roads in Odisha. Kalesh Kumar, Senior Procurement Specialist, The World Bank presented case study based on the Community Procurement implemented through 84 sub-projects in India supported by The World Bank. These sub-projects were successfully completed by the community involvement in procurement process. Pranav Bhattari, Deputy Director, Good Governance Project, Pro Public, Nepal presented the case of Community Score Card (CSC) pilot conducted in health sector of Nepal and shared that how service in health sector improved through CSC process. Om Prakash Arya presented the case of CUTS intervention in ensuring service delivery through community monitoring of health services in 30 primary health centres in Tonk district of Rajasthan during 2009-10.
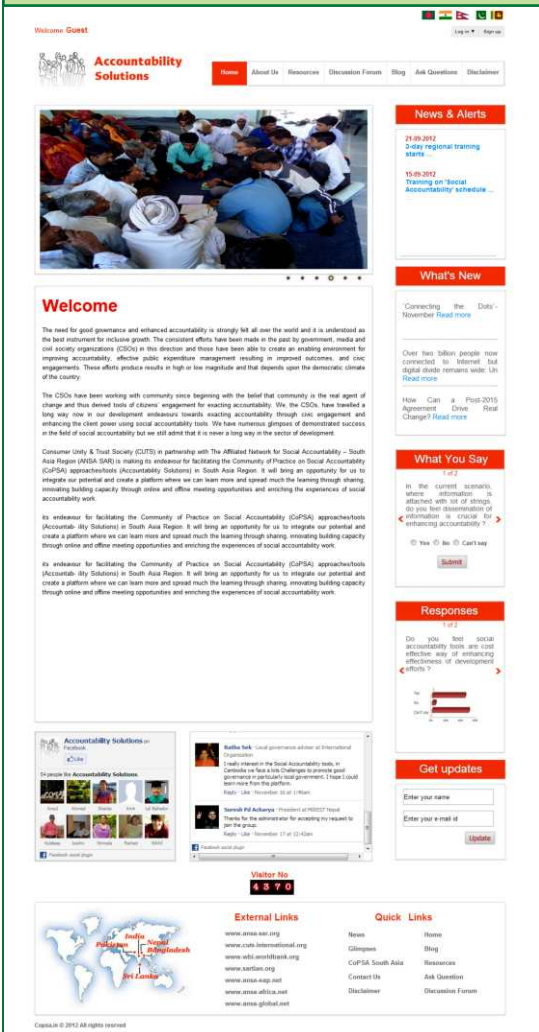

In the panel discussion moderated by Naimur Rahman, Chief Operation Officer, ANSA SAR, Bibhu Kalyan Mohanty from Sambandh, Bhubneshwar mentioned that there is need to study various kind of SAc approaches because different approaches work at different places. Mandakini D Surie, Programme Officer, The Asia Foundation said that there is growing recognition that SAc approaches are useful for improving the quality of governance, impacting effectiveness of service delivery and empowering citizens. Somikho Raha raised his concern about the incentive which can motivate stakeholders to be part of SAc approaches. Strategic investment in the area of SAc is also very important. Venkatesh Nayak, CHRI mentioned that a system should be in place because citizen cannot play the role of public servant in long term.

CoPSA portal

The CoPSA website is working well with various features, such as resources, blog, discussion forum and news alerts. Registered members of the website can write blog and any visitor can see and comments. These blogs will be moderated by the administrator. Visitor or any member can ask question to get resolution of their queries or doubts by filling some necessary information at Ask Question. Their questions are being answered by the administrator through emails. Registered members are getting regular updates about the activities. Online discussions are going on where different topics are being discussed. Face group is also helping reach larger group of communities. The response to the group is very encouraging and more than 4837 people visited the CoPSA web portal as of December 2012.

Networking under CoPSA

Under the project, country specific networking list of organisations working in the area of governance has been prepared and updated for five South Asian countries as well as at the international level. As of now, total number of listed organisations is 281, which includes organisations from India (98), Pakistan (42), Sri Lanka (19); Nepal (54); Bangladesh (23) and International (45). List is available at CoPSA web portal.

Social Accountability Resources

Using Social Media for Good Governance

This blog post was a contribution from Jude Hanan (World Bank's Web Governance Team) to the "People, Spaces, Deliberation" blog. The author talks about how 2011 was a year of turmoil economic meltdown deepened and continued, massive earthquakes struck New Zealand and a tsunami hit Japan. But she says 2011 will also be remembered for a different type of earthquake – the Arab Spring – an event that shook the Middle East, causing regimes across the region to totter and fall. Unlike other revolutions, this one used relatively new tools and technologies social media. Though the true impact of the Arab Spring is still playing out in Egypt and beyond, the events of 2011 created a new paradigm shift that governments now must consider: That society is no longer dominated by government or the market, but by the power of communities and groups.

To read this blog article, please visit: www.blogs.worldbank.org/publicsphere/using-social-media-good-governance

Citizens' Monitoring of the Education Sector in the Philippines

This article is a contribution of Michael Trucano (Senior ICT & Education Specialist at the World Bank) to the EduTech blog. He explains how increasingly (and encouragingly), there is talk of how to measure the impact of investments in the education sector. However, to measure 'impact' (however you choose to define it), you need to know what has actually happened (or not happened). When you are putting computers in all schools, or rolling out lots of new digital learning content, or training lots of teachers, how do you know that these sorts of things are actually taking place?

To read this blog article, please visit: http://blogs.worldbank.org/edutech/CMS-casestudy

Dhaka Declaration on Governance 2012

The International Conference on Governance and Public Service Transformation in South Asia offered a vital and timely multi-stakeholder platform to explore and examine required transformations for government and public sector institutions to meet growing citizen demands for stronger voice and participation in the governance and development processes. After discussions and deliberations, the delegates from 10 countries (Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Australia, Egypt, the Philippines, Switzerland, UK and the Netherlands) representing civil society, academia, government, and international institutions hereby adopt this declaration at Dhaka.

www.copsa.in/Resources/resourcesview.aspx?resource=64

Social Accountability News

Compendia on Social Accountability Released at Dhaka meet

Three compendia of experiments, put together to share success in community-led interventions on social accountability in South Asia, were released in Dhaka on December 07, 2012. These are "Building a Responsive Governance Ecosystem: Reflections from Select Social Accountability Experiments in India"; "Can Community Score Cards Make a Difference: The Case of Bangladesh"; and "Institutionalising the Concept of Social Accountability in Sri Lanka: Opportunities and Challenges".

Releasing the compendia, Jeff Thindwa of the World Bank Institute, Washington, said "The importance of research as a primary and effective tool help us to understand that contextual studies matter; that practices that work for India may not work well for Bangladesh. Thus, the three compendiums should be read keeping in mind these things."

The compendia include a diverse range of documentation on SAc coming from work done by an array of organisations based in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. The case studies focus on the efforts of NGOs towards strengthening transparency and accountability in governance by mobilising the strength of the communities they work among.

www.copsa.in/News/newsview.aspx?news=20

The Open Budget Survey 2012!

The International Budget Partnership released the Open Budget Survey 2012, the only independent, comparative, and regular measure of budget transparency and accountability around the world. Produced every two years by experts outside government, the 2012 Survey reveals that the national budgets of 77 of the 100 countries assessed these 77 countries are home to half the world's population fail to meet basic standards of budget transparency. Compounding this are the Survey's findings on the widespread failure of governments to provide sufficient opportunities for citizens and civil society to engage in budget processes. Budgets are essential for ensuring the delivery of critical services like maternal health and basic education. Is government investing your tax dollars sufficiently in these services? To answer this question, you need access to budget information and opportunities to hold the government to account.

www.copsa.in/News/newsview.aspx?news=22