

Sensitisation Event

# ‘Social Accountability in South Asia: Improving Development Outcomes’

Constitution Club of India, New Delhi  
December 18, 2012



*Organised by*



**Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) International,**  
Jaipur, India

*in Partnership with*



**Affiliated Network of Social Accountability-South Asia Region (ANSA SAR),**  
Dhaka, Bangladesh

## Introduction

The ‘Community of Practice on Social Accountability (CoPSA)’, popularly known as ‘Accountability Solutions’ in the South Asia Region, is a strategic endeavour to establish a ‘Community of Practice’ based on the tools of Social Accountability (SAC). This Community aims not only to create linkages between different level of actors and practitioners of SAC tools for knowledge exchange but also to mobilise and support new ideas and innovations of using the existing knowledge and creating new as well as advancing the practices and action on the ground. This initiative also aims to strengthen and deepen the synergy between different actors and institutions that are defining and redefining the theories and concepts of social accountability at the grassroots in the region.

To sensitise donor and government agencies on social accountability approaches, a sensitisation workshop, ‘Social Accountability in South Asia: Improving Development Outcomes’, was organised under CoPSA on Dec. 18, 2012 at Deputy Chairman Hall, Constitution Club of India, New Delhi, organised by CUTS International in collaboration with the Affiliated Network on Social Accountability South Asia Region (ANSA SAR).

## Participation

The workshop was attended by various representatives of donor agencies including The World Bank, The Asia Foundation, Oxfam India and the British High Commission. Representatives of several civil society organisations working on social accountability in India including PRIA, CCS, CHRI, LEAF Society, Unnati, YSD, Samarthan, Sambandh, SEEDS and Pro Public Public from Nepal actively took part in the meeting. It is to acknowledge the presence of Robert Chase, Lead Economist, South Asia Human Development, the World Bank; Bhvana Bhatia, South Asia Regional Coordinator, the World Bank Institute; and Naimur Rahman, Chief Operating Officer, ANSA SAR, added value to the event.

## Inaugural Session

### Welcome and Introduction

George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS International, welcomed the dignitaries and participants to the event and provided a brief introduction of CUTS and the evolution of the concept of CoPSA within ANSA SAR. He introduced the concept of Community of Practice (CoP) and said that community of interest is a group of people interested in a particular topic, sharing information and discussing it. CoP is different from community of interest. Moreover, CoP is not merely a club of friends or a network of connections. CoP is a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. It is having three characteristics - domain, practice and community. CoP has an identity defined as a shared domain of interest. Membership, therefore, implies a



commitment to the domain. Therefore, shared competence distinguishes members from the common people. CoP is a group of active practitioners and is not meant for non-practitioners. The notion of community creates the social fabric for learning. A strong community fosters interactions and encourages willingness to share. Combination of these three elements constitutes the CoP and developing these elements cultivates such a community.

CoPSA is an attempt to bring all the practitioners of SAc in South Asia on one platform. ANSA SAR entrusted CUTS with anchoring CoPSA in South Asia in January 2012. CoPSA is having both face-to-face and virtual activities. CoPSA web-portal, known as Accountability Solutions, is having large volume of resources on SAc as well as various features for online engagements. George further mentioned that ANSA SAR started working in the region since August 2009, mainly supporting civil society organisation to experiment and scale up social accountability interventions. In May 2011, ANSA decided to start CoP on four different issues. CUTS was given the responsibility of being the regional anchor of CoP on Social Accountability tools. Under CoPSA, country consultations were held in all five countries of South Asia. With inputs from all country consultations, the Inception Meeting of the CoPSA was held on Feb. 29, 2012 at Colombo, Sri Lanka. Recently, a capacity building programme was also conducted at the Kathmandu, Nepal, on the Social Accountability tools, which was attended by representatives of various civil society organisations and government representatives from south Asian countries.



## Inaugural Address

**Robert Chase**, Lead Economist, South Asia Human Development, the World Bank, delivered the inaugural address and showed his pleasure in joining the group that has experience and is familiar with social accountability approaches. He mentioned that adoption of social accountability approaches in South Asia is creating significant impact around the world. One of the reasons behind the World Bank promoting social accountability intervention is the great impact of it on development outcomes. Narrating the example of Ethiopia, he said that now after exposure of Ethiopian delegation to South Asian social accountability progress, 90 percent of the districts of Ethiopia have posted their budget on the website and 80 percent of the districts have feedback collection mechanism in place.



In 2004, the World Bank did a research project with the Government of India on impact evaluation of Education in U.P., A.P. and Karnataka states. There is improvement in access to education in South Asia. But, due to teachers' absenteeism, there is problem of learning, not access to education. The school committees are trying to reduce teachers' absenteeism and improving the learning outcomes. This evaluation did an information campaign to make citizens more aware of their rights, roles and responsibilities. The study showed that having citizens more involved in schools led to reduction of absenteeism and improved learning outcomes. Social accountability is

inclusive growth and better development outcomes. There were differences in the facts of three states. In different places, different approaches may work. It sounds good to improve the citizen engagement through Social Accountability, but on the ground, this work is very hard. Promoting transparency and accountability for citizens is not an easy task. We need to compare the work and intervention to know what works or what not works. Inclusive growth means not only every one gain but also contribution from the development outcomes. Sharing the experience of different organisations and different SAC approaches can help all of us to improve the learning of development outcomes.

**Bhavana Bhatia**, South Asia Regional Coordinator, the World Bank Institute, in her address expressed her pleasure of meeting the group of people with whom she has been interacting since last two years on ANSA platform. She congratulated CUTS for well managing the CoP on Social Accountability which is taking active role. CoPSA played an important role in getting active people to be able to interact, which is a key challenge for any CoP. WBI thought about CoP as a first initiative in South Asia. Knowledge, capacity building and connecting the stakeholders are the key element of CoP, which this journey of last three years is evolving. CoP is a very good example of cross regional experience sharing. At the same time, the role of people practising on ground and sharing their learning with others is important. She also appreciated Naimur Rahman for steering the ANSA.



Further, she mentioned about the various initiatives being taken up in the area of social accountability by the WBI. She talked about the initiative of promoting knowledge exchange through ANSA and community of practices (CoPs), capacity building of relevant stakeholders, engaging CSOs in budget process to demystify the budget process, motivating innovative practices and their documentation, use of information and communication technology and others. She also talked about COPSA and e-learning for encouraging achievements.

She presented the overview of WBI support in the area of Social Accountability and mentioned that WBI is comprehensively trying to work in social accountability. ANSA is also part of this initiative, which is not only in South Asia but has also started in Africa, East Asia and Arab. She talked about the interventions in the area of access to information (ATI) and Open Budget. Under ATI, work has been done for the capacity building of relevant stakeholders, creating awareness and sensitising the media. For strengthening Open Budget, CSOs were engaged and their capacities built for getting them involved in budget process and monitor the projects. Motivating innovative practices and their documentation, use of information and communication technology and building the capacity of media on the issues are part of the strategy of intervention. She also talked about COPSA and e-learning for encouraging achievements and informed that ANSA recently released a publication of ANSA supported 22 pilots in South Asia on Social Accountability during an international event in Dhaka. It is very important document.



## Technical Session: Sharing of Innovative Social Accountability Practices

Technical session was moderated by the George Cheriyan in which four case studies were presented by four presenters.



### **Bibhu Prasad Sahu** (Secretary, Youth for Social Development, Odisha, India)

Bibhu Prasad presented the innovative approach of citizen monitoring used in *Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna* (PMGSY) rural roads in Odisha. In his presentation, he mentioned that there was poor quality of roads constructed under the PMGSY due to various reasons. There was poor supervision, ignorance and unethical work practices found in the scheme. The funds allotted for routine maintenance and periodic maintenance are also insufficient. Due to lack of transparency in tendering and contracting process, there is collusion and corruption, flaws and loopholes in rules and regulations.



Social audit can improve the condition of road which has importance for the villages in terms of linking rural area with urban areas. It enhances the livelihood options and also saves transaction costs. It also improves access to basic services like health, education, etc.

Further, he described the process of community monitoring approach. For engaging the community, activities were performed like sensitisation, trainings and engaging in social auditing. Right to Information (RTI) and Road Monitoring Tools were also used. Public officials and elected representatives were constructively engaged in the process. Networking was done with Local NGO's and Civil Society. Media was engaged for information sharing and advocacy purpose. During the intervention, it was found that performances of the ongoing roads are dismally low. None of the roads even crossed the half way mark (3 medium score) of overall quality adherence. Visual observations in most of the roads showed that there is surface bleeding, surface undulations, roller marks, broken or damaged information boards and information is not visible, while road construction in general was at very slow pace.

Community monitoring is cost-effective monitoring in comparison to three-tier monitoring system of the government. This approach has created a sense of responsibility among different stakeholders including communities, service providers and local elected representatives and NGOs.

**Mr. Kalesh Kumar** (Senior Procurement Specialist, the World Bank)

Kalesh Kumar presented a 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 community involvement in procurement procedure. There were some factors and facilitating conditions behind the success. He briefed about the process of initiating these sub-projects and how the sampling and selection was done. Community was involved in the designing of sub-projects, decision of work to be done and appointing community members for procurements. There was mandate of women participation and president of the group would be from Dalit Community. Management of the fund was in the hand of community. Social audit committee in this project assured the quality of product, operation and maintenance.



Further, he shared that conventional procurement cycle starts with identifying the need, scheduling developing specifications, market search for bidders, tendering process, awarding the contract and contract management. Community may not have the knowledge about actual procurement procedure but there is commitment of getting better outcome in the sub-projects when it is handled by the community.

Mentioning the other key findings of sub-project, he said that there was 12 to 56 percent saving of time in comparison to other procurement projects. When other projects took nine months to complete a village road, community procurements completed the road in only six months. For the success of these sub-projects, there was need of rapport building in the community. It could happen by the strong entry point methods. To explain this, he shared the example from Tamil Nadu, where in a Gram Panchayat disabled persons identified and provided disability certificates. It enabled them to access many services from the government schemes. This engagement was helpful in forming SHGs of women and, in turn, they become the social mobilisers of sub-projects.

**Mr. Pranav Bhattarai** (Deputy Director, Good Governance Project, Pro Public, Nepal)



Pranav presented the case of Community Score Card (CSC) pilot conducted in health sector of Nepal. It was a joint effort of the Ministry of Health & Population, the World Bank & Pro Public which was implemented in 16 VDCs of four districts of Nepal. CUTS International provided training to representatives from local CSOs and health officials. This pilot project was conducted from December 2011 to March 2012. Officials of the Ministry of Health & Population were directly observing the CSC process.

He described a few features of the health sector in Nepal and said that there is significant budget allocation which is around Rs. 25 billion and various free health services

provisions for the public. But, there is poor implementation of the services. There is also absence of direct feedback mechanism between service providers and the community.

CSC as a social accountability tool relies on people's participation or civic engagement and operates from bottom up. It provides immediate feedback for improving public service delivery and empowers service recipients. CSC is also helpful in enhancing transparency & development outcomes.

After conducting the CSC intervention in health sector of Nepal, reduction was found in the rate of absenteeism in health centres. Staff has been deployed in four health posts as per the sanctioned quota. Punctuality & office time is being maintained. Supply of free medicines, cleanliness, sanitation and behavioural decency among service providers improved. People are getting quality services. Some other positive changes happened like fourth health posts allocated funds for continuing CSC process. Trained CSOs are also pursuing the CSC seeking funds locally. The Ministry of Health is positive toward institutionalising CSC in the health sector.

**Mr. Om Prakash Arya** (Senior Project Coordinator, CUTS, Rajasthan, India)

Om Prakash presented the case of CUTS intervention for ensuring service delivery through community monitoring of health services in 30 Primary Health Centers (PHC) in Tonk district of Rajasthan during 2009-10. CUTS formulated this intervention to improve health services by engaging citizens with the support of Results for Development (R4D) and Human Development Network of the World Bank. He described the design and process of the intervention. CUTS partnered with Community Based Organisations (CBOs) in catchments of PHCs. CBOs conducted a series of meetings with community & PRIs and conducted FGDs for identifying problems.



Community monitors were selected in the community meeting who did the monitoring for tracking absenteeism. Citizen Report Card (CRC) was conducted for getting the feedback of community on health services. Interface meetings were conducted involving the health officials, CBOs, PRIs and community. Findings of CRC were disseminated at block, district & state level for advocacy with relevant stakeholders. Intervention created a community-based monitoring.

Intervention resulted in various changes on the ground. The names of the health officials with their phone numbers were written on the wall. Involvement of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) was enhanced. Gram Panchayat with its own funds made water reservoir in the PHC premises. Due to increased vigilance of the state government, several health officials were suspended. Display of stock of medicines available was written on the wall and updated regularly. It acted as a trigger for several other organisations to do such kind of absenteeism study. The government took steps to train the member of VHSC for better execution of responsibilities.



It was found that participatory projects are complex to implement and deeply affected by the context. Involving communities in the project design and implementation creates closer connection between expenditure and beneficiaries. The people who benefitted most from engagement process are literate, connected to wealthy and powerful people and are centrally located. In the absence of other inputs, community involvement has very limited or no impact on services. Community-based development efforts have results confined to the life cycle of the project.

## Panel Discussion

### Social Accountability Impacting Development Outcomes – Role of Knowledge

Followed by the technical session, panel discussion took place which was moderated by **Naimur Rahman**, Chief Operation Officer, ANSA SAR. In the session, discussants shared their views mentioned below:



**Bibhu Kalyan Mohanty** from SAMBANDH, Bhubneshwar mentioned that we have to rethink about the impact by this network and beyond this network. We are in knowledge society and the new trend is pluralistic governance. For example, we have very good judiciary but there is delay in justice. By understanding the issues, we have to position ourselves. There is migration of corruption. We can see different kinds of corruption at present. There are various kinds of social accountability approaches required because in different places different approaches work. These tools or the approaches convert into knowledge and knowledge into social movements. This is the need of hour. CoPSA can play an important role in this. There is need of dialogue between demand and supply side.

**Mandakini D. Surie**, Program Officer, the Asia Foundation, said social accountability approaches and mechanisms are getting popularity not only in civil societies but also in government sector as well. Approaches like PETS, social audits, RTI and CRC are adopted by CSOs like CUTS, Pro Public, Samarthan, PRIA, PAC, etc., also in government schemes



and programmes. Social audits in NREGA or community monitoring in Village and Health Committees are examples of this. There is growing recognition that such SAC approaches are useful mainly for improving the quality of governance, impacting effectiveness of kind of service delivery we have in the ground and empowering citizens to say how services are being delivered better. She shared few initiatives supported by the Asia Foundation in India under open and accountable governance. TAF mainly supports innovative tools and approaches which are useful to hold the government and public servant accountable. She emphasised the importance of Social Networking approaches which are helpful in sharing the experience within and across borders by the network of stakeholders.



**Somikho Raha**, Ex. Governance Advisor, DFID, shared his views on the subject and mentioned that knowledge is power. The people with whom you are going to communicate will be empowered by that knowledge. Social accountability tools or approaches are helping in empowering the community. But we have insufficient knowledge and we have become salesmen. Context of any initiative is important to understand the success factors of that particular case. If we take the example of community monitoring then we should understand why should anybody get involved in the intervention without any incentives. What incentive can motivate anybody to be part of these approaches. Strategic investment in the area of social accountability is also very important. We should not just focus on marketing the case studies but also the context to understand the success or failure of any approach is very important. Tools of SAC may have its own context for getting success.

**Venkatesh Nayak**, Programme Coordinator, CHRI, made his point by stating the example of Kudankulam agitation against power reactor in Tamil Nadu. This is a matter of Governance that means the issue of power equations, rights and responsibility, entitlement and duties. He also shared examples of RTI project implemented in Gujarat. People are using RTI in project area very well but the Sarpanch of village was not happy, because people of against party were also filling RTI on different issues which were resulting in not getting funds on time. He mentioned that system should be in place. Citizen cannot play the role of public servant in long term. In short term, they may work. Community interventions are important but should there should be an existing constitutional system.





**Naimur Rahman** shared his views that all successful social accountability initiatives are happening at grass route level, where service providers are in regular touch with the community on daily basis. This discussion was on role of knowledge and development outcomes. Whether accountability impact development outcomes and are there enough evidences. He also shared that social accountability should not be the monopoly of civil society organisation. Media can also play important role here. He shared the example of Governance Now magazine and it's Colum *'Report from the other India'*. ICT is also very important in terms of promoting the SAc interventions. Expending and creating space for the people where they can actually see the different SAc interventions. There is need to concentrate on building new knowledge.

### **Vote of Thanks**

Amar Deep Singh thanked all guest speakers for sharing their knowledge with the participants. He expressed a sense of appreciation to all the presenters for presenting innovative case studies of social accountability approaches and the discussants of panel discussion for sharing their valuable thoughts in the workshop. He also thanked all the participants for actively taking part in the workshop and sharing their views.

