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# **Empowering the Marginalized: Case Studies of Social Accountability Initiatives in Asia**

Developed by

Public Affairs Foundation  
Bangalore, India  
and Karen Sirker and Sladjana Cosic

WBI Working Papers



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Public Affairs Foundation (Bangalore, India)/Karen Sirker and Sladjana Cosic (World Bank Institute)

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## Executive Summary

Recent years have witnessed growing concerns about issues of governance and accountability in developing countries. An emergent need exists for identifying and promoting approaches toward building accountability that rely on civic engagement. This volume demonstrates that compared with other regions, social accountability initiatives across South and Southeast Asia have a much greater element of community participation and involvement. Often, the collaboration between civil society groups and governments in many of these initiatives is striking and stands out in contrast to that in other regions.

*Empowering the Marginalized* reveals the power of demand-side approaches in enhancing governance through the concepts of citizens' voice, accountability, and responsiveness. It seeks to provide lessons on the establishment of social accountability mechanisms, thereby empowering the marginalized, who represent a majority of society not only in Asian countries, but in most developing countries worldwide. Since most of the projects documented in the case studies are fairly recent, the studies offer valuable practical lessons on program design and operation, establishment of partnerships and networks, and project management.

This volume is a continuation of an earlier stocktaking of social accountability initiatives in Asia and the Pacific, from which 13 of the 54 initiatives were studied in an attempt to analyze different social accountability tools and mechanisms as applied in different contexts. A number of these case studies cover countries (such as Nepal, Pakistan, Korea, and Japan) where very little literature exists on social accountability initiatives. Readers of this regional volume, particularly those new to social accountability, will be able to assess the patterns of projects undertaken in the region – including the types of social accountability projects which have been undertaken, the types of partnerships and networks which are typically established as part of such initiatives in this region, the areas of poverty and social delivery which the initiatives have focused on, and the types of problems these initiatives have typically encountered.

Social accountability encompasses an ever-widening spectrum of concepts and practices. These practices are initiated by a wide range of actors including communities, CSOs, government agencies, political leaders, the media, and donor and aid agencies; they use diverse strategies; employ different forms of both formal and informal sanctions; and vary according to the extent to which they are institutionalized versus independent or collaborative versus conflictive. Examples in this volume include citizen participation in public policy making, participatory budgeting, participatory gender budget formulation and analysis, independent budget analysis, public expenditure tracking, citizen monitoring of the performance of public service delivery and projects, social audits, electoral interventions, e-procurement and public advocacy campaigns.

The profiles of leadership and innovation from these case studies highlight how ordinary people can make a difference by asking the right questions at the right time in the right manner, or in other words, by making their voices heard, often backed by the evidence, information and communication strategies. Although far from being comprehensive, these cases reveal some cross-cutting concepts and applications that act as key enablers for social accountability, such as: responsiveness and voice; power of information; local ownership; political buy-in; and local capacity building. However, certain areas of concern need to be kept in perspective when exploring possibilities for replicating, adapting, and scaling up these tools, namely: fragility of civil society space; urban focus; challenges of adaptation and contextualization; and weak regional networking.



## Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAIN	ActionAid International Nepal
CBGA	Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability [India]
CCAGG	Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Government [Philippines]
CCB	Citizen community board [Pakistan]
CGG	Center for Good Governance [India]
CIET	Community Information and Epidemiological Technologies [Pakistan]
CMCA	Children’s Movement for Civic Awareness [India]
COA	Commission on Audit [Philippines]
CSO	Civil society organization
FITRA	Forum Indonesia Untuk Transparansi Anggaran (Indonesia Forum for Budget Transparency)
GePS	Government e-Procurement System [Republic of Korea]
IBP	International Budget Project
KPI	Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia (Indonesian Women’s Coalition for Justice and Democracy)
MPLADS	Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme [India]
NAMFREL	National Movement for Free Elections [Philippines]
NCOLC	National Citizen Ombudsmen Liaison Council [Japan]
NEDA	National Economic and Development Authority [Philippines]
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
PAC	Public Affairs Centre [India]
PPS	Public Procurement Service [Republic of Korea]
SLGDFP	Sirajganj Local Governance Development Fund Project [Bangladesh]
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme



# Introduction

In the past 10 years, civil society's capacity to undertake social accountability initiatives has been strengthened dramatically, particularly in Africa and Latin America. In Asia, documentation of social accountability initiatives has been extensive in India and somewhat less extensive in Indonesia and the Philippines, but this volume demonstrates that compared with other regions, social accountability initiatives across South and Southeast Asia have a much greater element of community participation and involvement. Often, the collaboration between civil society groups and governments in many of these initiatives is striking and stands out in contrast to that in other regions. The objective of this volume of case studies is to describe social accountability work not only in India, Indonesia, and the Philippines, but also in other parts of Asia where it has not been well documented.

*Empowering the Marginalized* reveals the power of demand-side approaches in enhancing governance through the concepts of citizens' voice, accountability, and responsiveness. It seeks to provide lessons on the establishment of social accountability mechanisms, thereby empowering the marginalized, who represent a majority of society not only in Asian countries, but in most developing countries worldwide.

This initiative built on the World Bank's continuing emphasis on supporting a number of initiatives aimed at involving citizens and citizen groups as a way to strengthen the accountability of governments to poor people. Examples of such initiatives include citizen participation in public policy making, participatory budgeting,<sup>1</sup> independent budget analysis, public expenditure tracking,<sup>2</sup> citizen monitoring of the performance of public service delivery and projects or subprojects,<sup>3</sup> social audits, citizen advisory boards, and lobbying and advocacy campaigns.

In 2004, the World Bank Institute commissioned the Philippine Center for Policy Studies at the University of the Philippines to conduct a stocktaking exercise on social accountability initiatives in Asia. The process included requesting contact information for individuals, organizations, advocacy groups, training institutes, and government agencies undertaking projects and initiatives pertaining to social accountability in Asia and the Pacific and documenting the initiatives. Of the 75 initiatives identified, detailed information was collected on 54 initiatives. A summary paper (Arroyo and Sirker 2005) of the 54 initiatives highlights the mix of forces, conditions, and motivating factors that led some social accountability initiatives to develop specific tools and mechanisms that were used to improve social accountability and points to the lessons learned from these initiatives.

In the next phase, information about 13 of the 54 initiatives was verified by World Bank Institute and case studies were developed in an attempt to analyze different social accountability tools and mechanisms as applied in different contexts. Given such an analysis, the generic elements of different

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<sup>1</sup> Participatory budgeting is broadly defined as a mechanism or process whereby citizens participate directly in the different phases of budget formulation, decision making, and monitoring of budget execution. Participatory budgeting can be instrumental in increasing the transparency of public expenditure and in improving budget targeting.

<sup>2</sup> Participatory public expenditure tracking involves citizen groups tracking how the government or other service providers actually spend funds with the aim of identifying leakages or bottlenecks in the flow of financial resources or inputs. Typically, such groups, assisted by civil society organizations, use the actual users or beneficiaries of the services to collect and publicly disseminate data on inputs and expenditures.

<sup>3</sup> Participatory performance monitoring entails citizen groups or communities monitoring and evaluating the implementation and performance of public services or projects according to indicators they themselves have selected. Performance monitoring also involves elements of public advocacy.

methodologies can be better understood along with the modifications that may be needed, the risks that may arise, and the critical success factors that apply when adopting these initiatives in different sectoral and cultural contexts, or when scaling them up from the local level to the national level.

This publication looks at the 13 selected social accountability initiatives in Asia and the Pacific, which were chosen based on the following broad criteria:

- They represent a wide spectrum of motivating factors.
- They were initiated by governments, the World Bank, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), or civil society organizations (CSOs).
- They represent wide geographic coverage within the region.
- They represent innovative concepts and tools aimed at holding governments accountable.
- They were all to a large extent successful in achieving their objectives.

## Organizing the Case Studies

The initiatives were also selected keeping in perspective the five functional domains of social accountability: (a) budgets, (b) public policy making and planning, (c) public goods and services, (d) expenditures, and (e) public oversight and monitoring. Given the cross-cutting impact of the initiatives, the cases are organized under the four broad thematic heads described below, but note that these are not rigid categories and that many initiatives cut across the thematic boundaries:

- *Undertaking informed budget advocacy.* Budgets are the blueprint for resource mobilization, allocation, and utilization. In countries grappling with poverty and social vulnerabilities, budgets are the most critical instrument for ensuring equity and inclusion in the design and implementation of development programs. Increasing evidence indicates that community participation and involvement go a long way toward making budget formulation processes more responsive and targeted to citizens' needs. In addition, civil society activists believe that budget documents need to be demystified for local citizens, that is, technical data need to be converted into useful indicators, through focused advocacy interventions. The four cases presented on this theme here are (a) the Budget Transparency Movement of the Indonesia Forum for Budget Transparency, (b) independent budget analysis by the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability in India, (c) budget analysis by ActionAid International Nepal, and (d) participatory gender budget formulation and gender budget analysis by the Indonesian Women's Coalition for Justice and Democracy.<sup>4</sup>
- *Engaging and empowering communities for service improvements.* Examples of social accountability in Asia are nuanced by gradual but growing examples of increasing community participation in the domain of governance and service delivery. Some of these initiatives have come from proactive governments, reinforcing the fact that dialectics by the state and civil society can complement and open up new opportunities for introducing innovative partnerships. This compilation discusses two initiatives that demonstrate how communities can be engaged in and empowered to demand accountability and responsiveness from government agencies: (a) the Sirajganj Local Governance Development Fund Project in Bangladesh, and (b) the citizen charters of People's Power in India.

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<sup>4</sup> Participatory gender budgeting uses gender analysis to evaluate the impact of government budgets on females and on males and to assess whether budgets respond to the needs of both women and men adequately. Participatory gender budget initiatives highlight citizens' right to participate in decisions that affect their lives and their equal right to access public resources.

- *Monitoring by public watchdogs.* Far from being passive observers of development and governance discourse, an increasingly vigilant civil society is critiquing, monitoring, and contesting the role of the state and its institutions in shaping and controlling the contours of governance. Working against heavy odds, many civil society groups have authored inspiring documents demonstrating the power of ordinary people in bringing about extraordinary changes. This volume explores five such initiatives: (a) social audits by Community Information and Epidemiological Technologies in Pakistan; (b) citizen monitoring of infrastructure projects in Abra, the Philippines; (c) the Textbook Count Program in the Philippines, (d) the National Citizen Ombudsmen Liaison Council in Japan; and (e) children's report card surveys by the Children's Movement for Civic Awareness in Bangalore, India.
- *Other initiatives.* Some innovative and "out of box" approaches to social accountability are also becoming apparent. One example is the electoral interventions by the Public Affairs Centre in Bangalore, India, which is an initiative to bring elements of accountability and probity to the political processes. Another is the e-procurement initiative of the Republic of Korea, which has introduced innovations in the use of information and communication technology.

## Placing Social Accountability in Context

Recent years have witnessed growing concerns about issues of governance and accountability in developing countries. Several reasons explain this trend (Paul 2005). First is the mounting dissatisfaction with the manner in which states have performed their functions in these countries. Ample evidence shows that in many cases, public investments have resulted in meager returns and low productivity. Some of the key contributing factors underlying this phenomenon are lack of transparency, inadequate rule of law, and corruption. Second is the failure of many developing countries to achieve significant poverty reduction, and the consequent inequity and injustice millions of marginalized people face. The weak bargaining power and organizational capabilities of the poor have no doubt contributed to this outcome. Third is a growing realization that existing mechanisms for ensuring public accountability have not been able to resolve governance and accountability problems.

In democratic states, the perceived solution to glaring aberrations in governance and accountability is elections. Periodic elections are seen as the most potent option that citizens can exercise to hold the state accountable for its performance. However, the dilemma is that although much occurs between elections in terms of transactions between the state and its citizens, individual citizens can do little in the short run if things go wrong during the discharge of functions or provision of services by the state's agencies. Waiting for the next election is of little help to a citizen who needs immediate corrective action. The problem is further compounded by the fact that citizens have no option for exit as in the marketplace, where they can exit from one supplier of a good or service to another. Thus an emergent need clearly exists for identifying and promoting approaches toward building accountability that rely on civic engagement, that is, in which ordinary citizens or CSOs participate directly or indirectly in exacting accountability.

## Defining Social Accountability

Social accountability affirms direct accountability relationships between citizens and the state and puts them into operation. In particular, social accountability refers to the broad range of actions and mechanisms (beyond voting) that citizens can use to hold the state to account, as well as the actions

on the part of government, civil society, media, and other societal actors that promote or facilitate these efforts (World Bank 2006).

Social accountability mechanisms include a wide range of tools, methods, and strategies that involve ordinary citizens and civil society in the process of allocating, tracking, and monitoring the use of public resources. Social accountability mechanisms both complement and enhance conventional “internal” mechanisms of accountability, underscore citizens’ rights to expect the government to act in the best interests of the people and to ensure that it does so, and use a range of both formal and informal rewards and sanctions.

Social accountability mechanisms come into play in the following three critical areas:

- *Improved governance.* Given the proven limitations of formal accountability mechanisms, including elections, to promote good governance and strengthen democratic processes, social accountability tools and approaches have emerged as potent strategies in monitoring government performance, demanding and enhancing accountability, and exposing government failures and misdeeds.
- *Improved public policies and services.* Whereas social accountability is often seen as a simple and direct process that takes place along the interface between the state and citizens, in actuality it is a complex process mediated by the character of the state’s institutions and processes, as well as the social structure of the polity, including that of civil society. The World Bank (2003) has added significant depth and clarity to the debate on social accountability. It has redefined the arena by distinguishing accountability by political leaders and policy makers from that of the state as provider of services. Emergent profiles of social accountability mechanisms offer insights whereby each of these accountability relationships can be made operational. By enhancing citizen information and voice, introducing incentives for “downward” accountability and creating mechanisms for participatory monitoring and citizen-state dialogue and negotiation, social accountability mechanisms can make important contributions to more informed policy design and improved public service delivery.
- *Empowerment.* Social accountability initiatives can contribute to empowerment, particularly that of marginalized people. The World Bank (2001, 2002) recognizes accountability as an integral component of empowerment, and hence of poverty reduction and sustainable development. By providing critical information on rights and entitlements and introducing mechanisms that enhance citizens’ voice and influence in relation to the government, social accountability initiatives serve to enhance both these key determinants of empowerment. Of particular importance is the potential of social accountability initiatives to empower those social groups that are systematically underrepresented in formal political institutions, such as women, youth, and poor people.

## **Mapping Social Accountability in Practice**

Social accountability encompasses an ever-widening spectrum of concepts and practices. These practices are initiated by a wide range of actors, for instance, communities, CSOs, government agencies, political leaders, the media, and donor and aid agencies; use diverse strategies, such as research, monitoring, participatory planning, civic education, media advocacy, coalition building, and partnerships; employ different forms of both formal and informal sanctions; and vary according to the extent to which they are institutionalized versus independent or collaborative versus conflictive. In a broad sense, social accountability initiatives straddle the following five functional areas, though in

practice, seeing a single social accountability initiative affecting a combination of areas or all five is commonplace:

- *Budgets.* Citizen involvement in preparing and analyzing budgets is another rapidly expanding domain of social accountability. Participatory budget formulation is most common at the local level, but can also be found at higher levels. At the national level, more common examples of budget-related social accountability practices include efforts by civil society to analyze the impact and implications of budget allocations, demystify the technical content of the budget, raise awareness about budget-related issues, point out discrepancies between government policy priorities and resource allocations, and undertake public education campaigns to improve budget literacy.
- *Policy making and planning.* Increasing evidence points to the institutionalization of proactive public engagement and participation in the formulation of public policies and plans. Examples include participatory policy making (for example, the participatory formulation of poverty reduction strategies) at the national level and participatory processes in development planning at the local level. In many countries, civil society actors also play a key role in reviewing, critiquing, and building public awareness about policies and plans in such key areas as gender equity, environmental protection, youth empowerment, employment, and social services.
- *Public goods and services.* Another category of social accountability practices seeks accountability with regard to the relevance, accessibility, and quality of public goods and services. Typically this involves citizen participation in the monitoring and evaluation of priority services, often according to indicators that citizens themselves have selected. Emergent examples include public opinion polls, citizen report cards, community scorecards, public hearings, and social audits.
- *Expenditures.* An important aspect of social accountability is citizens' ability to hold government accountable for how it handles public monies. Public expenditure tracking surveys are an example of an expenditure-related social accountability practice that can be applied at the national level, with the aim of monitoring the flow of financial or physical resources and identifying leakages or bottlenecks in the system. This approach often involves comparing information received from the disbursement records of finance ministries, accounts submitted by line agencies, and information obtained from independent inquiry (using tools such as social audits). It is also applied at the local level in monitoring budgets for village infrastructure, credit and savings organizations, or local government expenditures.
- *Public oversight and monitoring.* A final category of social accountability practices includes those that aim to improve public oversight and monitoring. Examples include the creation of independent citizen oversight committees or watchdog groups at the local or national level or forms of civic engagement that aim to enhance the effectiveness of existing oversight mechanisms. They might include CSOs playing an intermediary or facilitating role between citizens and agencies, such as ombudsmen or anticorruption commissions, citizen or community representative membership on school or hospital boards, or public participation in or scrutiny of the work of parliamentary or other internal oversight committees.



## The Case Studies

The following case studies describe different social accountability tools and mechanisms as applied in different contexts in an attempt to illustrate the generic elements of different methodologies, along with the critical success factors that apply when adopting these initiatives in different sectoral and cultural contexts, or when scaling them up from the local level to the national level. Whereas many of the case studies cover the public expenditure management cycle, such as budget analysis, budget formulation, budget expenditure tracking, and performance monitoring, other social accountability case studies pertain to social audits and the right to information.

### **Informed Budget Advocacy**

Budgets are often seen as highly technical documents that are far removed from public scrutiny and analysis. However, recent efforts have focused on demystifying budgets and subjecting them to focused observation and advocacy. Citizens' groups increasingly see budget analyses as potent accountability tools for stimulating public participation and demanding more responsiveness and accountability from governments. Social accountability mechanisms usually span four stages in relation to the public expenditure management cycle or the budget cycle: (a) budget formulation, (b) budget analysis and demystification, (c) expenditure tracking, and (d) performance monitoring.

### **BUDGET TRANSPARENCY MOVEMENT: INDONESIA FORUM FOR BUDGET TRANSPARENCY**

Throughout President's Suharto's 30-year term, Indonesia's system of government became increasingly centralized and autocratic. Indeed, these two features of government reinforced each other. When President Suharto stepped down in May 1998, Indonesia experienced a dramatic push toward democracy. Characterized by free elections, freedom of the press, and nationwide calls for reform, this democratization process also gave rise to regional demands for the central government to decentralize its power and responsibilities. Other characteristics of the post-Suharto era were an increasing demand for good and transparent governance and the involvement of CSOs in influencing people's participation in development and public policy.

The transition was not easy, however, as the newly democratized country had to overcome the challenges of its authoritarian past. The main challenges in the post-Suharto milieu included the following:

- Tackling the deep-rooted mindsets of existing political and bureaucratic players
- Preventing the tendency of local governments to replicate the practices of the former centralized government, especially as the decentralization process, which granted local governments greater political and financial powers, was accompanied by the same corruption, collusion, and nepotism that had characterized the previous authoritarian regime
- Reforming the budget management policy, which the authorities still considered to be confidential and off-limits to citizens

Some of the changes that needed to transform a centralized autocracy to a decentralized democracy were implemented relatively quickly, for example, by holding free elections and by passing laws that transferred central government functions to the regions. Other essential changes have taken much longer, such as changing the mind-set of public servants and building the capacity of regions to cope with their new functions.

### ***Scope and Description of the Initiative***

An important feature of Indonesia's decentralization policy was that budget management fell into the domain of local government institutions. After more than 30 years with a highly centralized national government, Indonesia decided to implement a decentralization policy that became effective on January 1, 2001. The main objectives of decentralization included promoting improved delivery of government services and raising the level of local government accountability. The new decentralization policy was outlined in the Local Government Law (number 22/1999), the Fiscal Relations Law (number 25/1999), and the Clean and Good Governance Practice Law (number 28/1999). These laws were based on five principles, namely: democracy, community participation and empowerment, equity and justice, recognition of the potential of diversity within regions, and need to strengthen local legislatures. These five principles support Indonesia's push for reform, which aims to eradicate corruption, collusion, and nepotism within the government bureaucracy.

The decentralization laws are quite unusual, because almost all powers and responsibilities were ceded to local governments without any conditions and limitations. Consequently, the onus was on local governments to reform their internal structures to accommodate the huge increase in responsibilities that was passed on to them from the central government. Under the new policy, both national-level departments and local governments were granted the authority to plan and design their own budgets. Even though this was a welcome policy change, serious flaws were apparent in relation to the lack of transparency of budget preparations and citizen participation in them. Citizens were upset that even final budget documents were not open to public scrutiny. Many groups began to express their concerns that if too much unchecked authority were placed in the hands of regional governments, they would begin to act arbitrarily. With large levels of funds at their disposal, many feared that this would lead to the creation of "little kingdoms" in the regions ruled by "little dictators."

In response, a diverse group of concerned citizens that included academics, development practitioners, NGO activists, journalists, and government officials joined forces to promote the development of a participatory budgeting process, to promote participatory development in general, and to fight corruption. Group members traveled around the country for eight months disseminating information and initiating discussions on the issue. They concluded that an organization was needed to anticipate the misuse of budgets, to stem rampant corruption, and to curtail the arbitrary use of power by local government officials and their allies. The result was the founding of the Indonesia Forum for Budget Transparency (Forum Indonesia Untuk Transparansi Anggaran or FITRA), at the end of 1999 as a civil society alliance with seven local networks in seven provinces. Since that time FITRA has emerged as a robust civil society forum that promotes budget transparency.

### ***Objectives***

FITRA undertakes budget analysis and advocacy work to increase people's awareness of their rights regarding the budget process. Its main objectives are to achieve the following:

- Build capacity for conducting regular expenditure analyses
- Provide a better understanding of budget allocations and expenditures across administrative levels and sectors, including extrabudgetary activities
- Encourage practices that enhance transparency to support more accountable and service-oriented provision of public services

FITRA also focuses on public service delivery and advocates the inclusion of women in its processes.

### ***Tools and Approaches***

To help Indonesian citizens understand the process of budget planning and budget management in government agencies, to provide tools for transparency, and to monitor budget spending and allocations, FITRA has undertaken the following activities:

- *Research.* FITRA undertakes studies on public service provision, gender budgeting, and development policies. One project on gender is a comparative study of municipalities run by women versus those run by men that seeks to determine whether the former have introduced more pro-women policies and budgets.
- *Budget analysis.* Budget analysis, which includes analysis of laws and budget regulations, covers one entire province and several districts in a different province. Once FITRA has procured budget documents, it examines budget allocations in relation to their rationality, efficacy, and efficiency. After obtaining comparative, budget-related data, FITRA prepares a draft analysis that it discusses first on a limited basis with other stakeholders, and then at a series of public discussions. Finally, FITRA publishes and disseminates the results of the analysis.
- *Budget advocacy.* FITRA organizes debates on provincial budgets, conducts workshops and training sessions on budget advocacy and analysis, holds public hearings, and canvasses public opinion on certain budget issues. The network lobbies the government on the budget, pressing for greater public participation in formulating policy and preparing the budget. Its budget advocacy activities also include building alliances and undertaking litigation.
- *Sector advocacy.* FITRA organizes meetings between stakeholders. Its advocacy work focuses on weaker segments of society, such as the poor, women, farmers, and fishermen; on sectors such as social forestry and health; and on such activities such as strengthening village institutions. For example, FITRA facilitated meetings between women and public transport providers to explore the impact on schoolchildren of a decreased subsidy for public transport fares.
- *Media advocacy and dissemination strategies.* FITRA disseminates information through the mass media, public discussions, campaigns, and books that it publishes. The network effectively harnesses local media for its news releases and advertisements. As a result, for example, a national newspaper used FITRA's findings to criticize the government for failing to begin several key projects. FITRA organizes public discussions with the government, parliament, NGOs, and academia. It has also publicized its campaigns through posters, stickers, leaflets, and flyers targeted at legislative council members and the public at large.
- *Civic engagement in the budget process.* Since the 1999 passage of the Law on Local Government, the Law on Fiscal Relations, and the Law on Clean and Good Governance Practice, each district and city has set its own regulatory framework that covers implementation of the laws in its jurisdiction. The most influential regulations that determine local budget practices are the decrees on financial management and control procedures and accounting. These regulations explicitly note that people have the right to participate in the budgeting process as long as they comply with the rules and procedures in effect.
- *Public campaigns.* FITRA's public campaign that followed its analysis of the budget was an attempt to increase the transparency and accountability of, and participation in, the budgetary process. This campaign pointed out apparent misuses of public funds and involved litigation in relation to abuses of power in budget implementation. This effort incrementally built the public's confidence in FITRA's activities. FITRA also joined forces with other NGOs to advocate on issues such as gender budgeting, pro-poor budgeting, budgeting for better public services, and rational budget allocation. Through its multipronged approach of media

dissemination, public information campaigns, and sector advocacy, FITRA was able to develop common understanding among CSOs and government agencies about the need to work together in relation to budget making.

- *Community discussions.* Community groups began to build coalitions to push for greater transparency in local budgets. FITRA's hearings on provincial budgets are widely attended by the general public. Its community discussions provide one means for community-based monitoring of budgets. The process includes documenting activities at the grassroots level; analyzing problems and needs; and providing knowledge about the public's rights concerning budget allocations, corruption issues, and public service delivery conditions. At these discussions, community members also interact directly with local government representatives to give voice to their demands.

### ***Partners and Stakeholders***

FITRA's target audience includes NGO activists, journalists, student activists, government officials, politicians (members of parliament, mostly at the local level), communities, marginalized populations (the poor, women, villagers), and NGOs that focus on budget transparency. FITRA has more than 30 NGOs in its network.

### ***Resources***

FITRA receives its financial support from donor agencies and alternative sources, such as its publications, training, and consultancy services. To carry out its activities, FITRA hires staff with capacities in budget analysis, budget investigation, advocacy, and facilitation. To further enhance its capacity, FITRA builds networks with international NGOs.

### ***Constraints and Problems***

FITRA has faced many problems and challenges in implementing its multifaceted program, including the following:

- *Difficulties in accessing budget documents.* Government officials and members of parliament are still unwilling to share budget-related information with the public. They continue to view budgets as secret documents outside the realm of understanding of ordinary people. This means that FITRA's attempts to obtain budget documents from government officials through official channels often meet with failure, and FITRA must resort to acquiring budget documents from informal contacts within the government. Often such contacts are government officers and legislators sympathetic to the need for transparency and openness in the budgetary process.
- *Collusion among members of the state apparatus.* Despite evidence of budget misuse and corruption, officials at both the national and local levels have been quick to dismiss such findings.
- *Low levels of participation.* As the budgeting process has been closed, public knowledge about budget allocations is limited. The budgeting process is still far from transparent and the government apparatus does not willingly part with information. The business community is concerned only with the money that goes to its own projects, and until the advent of FITRA, CSOs never involved themselves in the budgeting process.
- *Threats to members.* Members have been threatened by indicted government officials and politicians.

## Outputs

Despite the constraints and challenges that FITRA faces, many successful outputs have been attributed to its interventions, namely:

- *Affecting policy.* FITRA's research and analysis have drawn the attention of local governments, which have stipulated regulations that promote budget transparency. The government has also attempted to usher in accountability through the implementation of performance budgeting.
- *Promoting participation.* Whereas budget analysis is still a highly technical domain and therefore restricted to a few, other aspects of FITRA's program involve a high level of participation by all stakeholders. Initially, citizen groups viewed FITRA as an elitist movement, but it slowly began to involve local activists and university faculty who have direct links to the grassroots. Thereafter the movement spread from the national to the local level, and once local communities were convinced of the movement's results, they began to play an active role.
- *Stimulating public awareness.* FITRA has launched budget debates before and after the legislative process, making the public aware of the significance of budget transparency and of their rights with regard to local budgets. FITRA's reports on politicians' use of funds stirred up public anger and forced officials to use public funds responsibly and transparently.
- *Changing bureaucratic attitudes.* The dissemination of FITRA's research results has made the state apparatus more transparent. Local budgets are also reportedly becoming more pro-poor.
- *Deterring corruption.* The media have used FITRA's analyses to scrutinize corruption cases, a number of which have been brought to trial as a result of FITRA's public campaigns. The movement's disclosure of corruption at the local level has acted as a deterrent, with fewer cases of corruption being reported at the local level. Some outputs of FITRA's efforts to deter corruption include the following:
  - More than 20 local councilors in Kendari (Southeast Sulawesi Province) were accused of misuse of the local budget. The case was sent to trial.
  - FITRA reports of misuse of the National Election Commission's budget (2002–04) were submitted to the independent national state auditor and the matter was investigated by the National Commission for Fighting Corruption.
  - The governor of Southeast Sulawesi Province was suspected of being involved in a fraudulent electricity project. The case was investigated and submitted to the National Commission for Fighting Corruption and the attorney general.
- *Networking.* FITRA has developed clout in relation to advocacy networking at the local and national levels. Its activists undertake budget advocacy at the local level by disseminating budget analysis results to grassroots communities and local media and lobbying pertinent government officials and members of the judiciary. The connections forged with national media ensure nationwide coverage of local cases of budget misuse and corruption unearthed by the network. FITRA has also developed strong links with national forums to expose corruption at the local level, especially if power is concentrated among local elites. Working with other institutions, FITRA has sought to promote the links between budgets and people's interests, especially the delivery of public services to the poor. FITRA works with local NGOs to encourage participation at the grassroots level.
- *Promoting government buy-in.* An important aspect of the push for budget transparency is that local governments have promulgated regulations that promote budget transparency.

FITRA works with local governments to train new members on the budgetary process. Its activities have won the trust of government officials, some of whom even support the movement openly in the media. Nevertheless, wholesale buy-in by the government is still largely absent: legislators are invited to public discussions organized by FITRA but rarely attend, and parliament is still not responsive to proposed budget changes.

### ***Institutionalization***

Although FITRA is a movement, its work is likely to be sustainable, because other NGOs have begun to show interest in the campaign for budget transparency. FITRA is therefore confident that the involvement of these other actors will ensure continuation of its nationwide campaign. In 2004, with support from the Ford Foundation–Jakarta, Indonesian NGOs embarked on a multiyear exercise to promote public involvement in the budget process at both the national and local levels. This program established seven focal points for the FITRA network around the country, and encouraged more local research institutions and NGOs to participate in FITRA’s budget transparency movement.

FITRA also plans to establish a local learning center on budget analysis and advocacy in the city of Kendari in Southeast Sulawesi. There it can pass on the crucial knowledge it has gained to a larger number and more diverse group of stakeholders, thereby contributing to the movement’s sustainability.

### ***Replication and Scaling Up***

FITRA’s movement for budget transparency has been scaled up to other regions, where results of budget analyses have become a reference for local legislative and other institutions. For example, General Election Cost Monitoring has been working in four regions since 2003 to encourage budget transparency and accountability, the Pro-Poor Budget Program has been working in four regions since 2005 to represent the needs of poor people, and the Local Budget Program has been working in four regions since 2005.

FITRA seeks to involve increasingly more citizens in various stages of the budget process, that is, planning, legislation, implementation, and accountability. One way to achieve greater citizen participation is through a planned awareness campaign, especially for grassroots communities, on their rights with regard to the budget. FITRA has also developed a strategy for greater government buy-in: building networks with elected representatives to influence government policy. The hope is that critical partnerships with members of the executive, legislature, and political parties will promote pro-poor budgets, especially with regard to education, health, housing, and water and sanitation.

*Sources:* Fernandez 2004; Ida 2005; Saad 2001; Usman 2001; Web site of the International Budget Project (<http://www.internationalbudget.org/groups/indonesia.htm>).

## **INDEPENDENT BUDGET ANALYSIS, CENTRE FOR BUDGET AND GOVERNANCE ACCOUNTABILITY, INDIA**

The Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability (CBGA), located in New Delhi, is a project of the National Centre for Advocacy Studies in Pune, which is a membership-based resource center that advocates social change by strengthening rights-based and people-centered advocacy. The National Centre for Advocacy Studies works with social action groups and professionals, as well as with public-spirited citizens. In 2002, the National Centre for Advocacy Studies and other groups interested in budget-related issues came together to form the People’s Budget Information and Analysis Service, an umbrella group of Indian civil society groups working on budget issues. The People’s Budget Information and Analysis Service acted as the preparatory platform for the CBGA, which was established with funding from the Ford Foundation.

### ***Scope and Description of the Initiative***

The mission of the new center was to promote transparent, accountable, and participatory governance, focusing on a people-centered perspective in budget preparation and execution. The center began functioning in New Delhi in 2002, with the primary task of building on and extending the initiatives of various budget groups at national and state levels, paying particular attention to the perspective of marginalized segments of society. In November 2003, the center was renamed as the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability to reflect its broader scope. In its first year, the CBGA attempted to establish its institutional and organizational network with social action groups and other actors, such as the media, planners, policy makers, and academics.

The CBGA operates on the principle that the first step toward an accountable and transparent system of governance is gathering budgetary information. The domain of governance is, in many ways, related to budgetary trends and priorities, in that budgets indicate the government's policies and programs. Arguments advocating particular policy directions that are substantiated by budgetary information will be far more credible and effective than those made without such information. Such information enables citizens and social action groups to compel the government to be more alert to the needs and aspirations of people in general and of vulnerable groups in particular.

### ***Objectives***

With the aim of strengthening the transparency and accountability of governance and protecting the rights of marginalized segments of society in India and elsewhere, the CBGA's objectives are as follows:

- Make governance accountable to the people
- Influence policy formulation from the perspective of poor, ordinary, and marginalized citizens and groups
- Initiate public argument and debate macroeconomic issues from peoples' perspective
- Demystify the budget and the budgetary process to make it more transparent and citizen-friendly
- Network with groups working on budget analysis
- Build the capacities of NGOs, social action groups, and budget analysis movements

The key accountability issues that the CBGA seeks to address are the openness of the Union (federal) government's budget process, expenditure monitoring, and public policies through analysis and information gathering, and citizens' awareness of and participation in these activities.

### ***Tools and Approaches***

In an effort to reach a variety of stakeholders, such as policy makers, parliamentarians, civil society, local communities, the media, and the general public, the CBGA undertakes the following activities:

- *Budget analysis.* This involves analysis of the Union government's budget every year. The CBGA conducts a trend analysis of major economic indicators, including allocations to sectors such as education, health, and agriculture. For example, in its analysis of the 2005 budget, the CBGA attempted to find out whether state intervention in favor of the poor, as envisaged in the budget, actually had the intended impact. Its report, *Response to the Union Budget 2005*, concluded that even though the budget does reflect a change in policy priorities in favor of the rural population and the social sectors, the budgetary allocations for these sectors did not show a major increase.

- *Expenditure monitoring.* This is a new initiative and explores specific government policies relating to such fields as education, health, agriculture, rural development, and poverty alleviation. According to budget documents, funds are allocated to all ministries and departments. However, the government treasury does not release the funds as soon as the budget is enacted but after some time has passed, and the allocations of funds can deviate from destinations shown in the budget. Therefore one of the primary tasks of the CBGA is to ascertain whether the funds allocated in the budget have actually been passed on, as indicated in the budget and the extent of the time lag. The CBGA's expenditure monitoring activities also revolve around discerning whether government funds are financing pro-poor programs and identifying the institutional loopholes or bottlenecks that impede the implementation of pro-poor policies. Therefore the CBGA's primary mandate has been to track the policy priorities driving Union budgets and other important public policies of the Union government. The CBGA undertakes trend analysis of Union budgets and of specific socioeconomic indicators, and publishes its results in the form of responses to Union budgets and in its *Budget Track* newsletter.
- *Research.* Through its research on public expenditure processes, the CBGA's Manual Series attempts to find answers to crucial issues and draw the public's attention to relevant governance issues. The CBGA has conducted the following two studies pertaining to the use of public funds:
  - One study concerned the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS). Since December 1993, members of parliament have been allotted funds for development work in their constituencies. Today, each member of parliament receives Rs 20 million per year under the MPLADS. The MPLADS study looked into various aspects of the scheme, including budgetary provisions; resulting benefits accrued to people, with a focus on benefits accruing to marginalized segments of society; mechanisms and patterns of expenditure; and effectiveness in eradicating poverty and creating durable assets. The most crucial feedback from the study was the need to provide a clear set of operational guidelines for the scheme.
  - The other study concerned the Calamity Relief Fund. A 2004 CBGA report entitled *Natural Disasters and Relief Provisions in India: Commitments and Ground Realities* focuses on state financing of responses to disasters. After examining the reasons for setting up the Calamity Relief Fund, the report compares the fund with similar schemes that existed in the past. It then delves into whether the current structure of the fund is acceptable and goes on to provide suggestions for modifying its structure so that it can play an effective role in disaster management in the future.
- *Demystification.* Budgets are far removed from people's daily lives. In a country like India, where almost 50 percent of the population is illiterate and many have never had more than a few hundred rupees at a time, the budget and the millions of rupees involved grouped under various headings or line items make little sense. Even the middle class, who constitute around 20 percent of the population, understands the budget only through simplified messages disseminated by the mass media. Such media images are often what determine public perceptions of the budget rather than perceptive analysis and understanding of the actual document. Demystification of the budget is therefore an important step toward the creation of an environment conducive to public advocacy. The CBGA tries to simplify the budget by developing reference guides and training manuals. The primary objective is to ascertain how budget funds are being used to meet people's needs and aspirations. For example, to demystify the Union budget for 2003–04, the CBGA published a report that was presented at a colloquium on the budget held in New Delhi in March 2003 and covered by major newspapers.

- *Information dissemination.* Since September 2003, the CBGA has been publishing *Budget Track*, a quarterly update on the budget and policy issues. The idea is to make governments accountable by informing citizens about budget-related information in a way that they can understand and empowering them to seek information on the performance of the government in relation to the budget. The CBGA is trying to put together a cost-effective dissemination strategy covering a mix of media, from hard copy publications to e-tools. It is also attempting to translate its work into regional languages.
- *Capacity building in budget analysis and advocacy.* The CBGA has developed in-house expertise to build the capacity of civil society groups for budget analysis and advocacy, and in 2004–05 conducted a series of five workshops at the national and regional levels in collaboration with various civil society groups. During these workshops, people involved in budget work shared their experiences on how analysis can be transformed into positive budget outcomes. All the workshops were planned and conducted as initiatives for laying the necessary foundations with regard to budget work: that is, helping participants recognize that information about budgets is a vital tool for seeking a change in policies and governance in favor of the poor. The CBGA intends to follow up on these workshops with more advanced workshops aimed at strengthening participants' capacities (ideally participants who had attended the first round of workshops) to undertake budget work and make strategic use of budget information for advocacy.
- *Media partnerships.* The media pay a great deal of attention to the budget during its presentation in parliament from the last week of February through mid-March every year, but the debates die down even before parliament has passed the budget. In addition, during this short-lived public scrutiny, the media focus primarily on issues that affect the urban, middle-class population, as they are the largest customers of electronic and print media. Given these circumstances, the CBGA has found it somewhat difficult to build a dependable alliance with the media in pursuit of its objectives. Also, during its initial years, the CBGA's interactions with the media resulted mostly from specific events. Thus the CBGA is currently modifying its approach by means of a comprehensive strategy for media advocacy. Nevertheless, prominent national and regional newspapers devoted detailed coverage to the CBGA's report on the MPLADS; *Down to Earth*, a magazine published by the Centre for Science and Environment, covered the CBGA's report on the Calamity Relief Fund; and prominent national newspapers covered the CBGA's response to the 2005–06 Union budget.

### ***Partners and Stakeholders***

The budget is prepared by specialists, and reading and understanding the budget requires a certain level of expertise in finance. Thus budget analysis is technical and cannot be undertaken by nonspecialists. However, the CBGA's activities involve transferring expertise so that the most disadvantaged segments of society can understand budgetary implications and be inspired to question the manner in which they are governed.

Aside from the National Centre for Advocacy Studies, the main stakeholders are social action groups and other actors, such as the media, planners, policy makers, and academics.

### ***Resources***

In addition to the financial support from the Ford Foundation, the CBGA has received funding for research and documentation activities from which it draws some resources. The CBGA also draws from its human resources in terms of the organization's advocacy skills; from its in-house and network technical skills; and from the ideas, commitment, perseverance, and leadership skills of its staff.

### ***Constraints and Problems***

As the scale and depth of the CBGA's work expanded, it faced several challenges, including the following:

- Accomplishing certain tasks because of limited organizational strength
- Making budgetary issues comprehensible to lay people and encouraging them to work on budgets or use budgetary information for advocacy purposes
- Building alliances with sociopolitical movements
- Canvassing media support
- Linking up with social action groups actively engaged in making governance accountable
- Translating research into effective advocacy

The CBGA's work does not seem to have influenced the local level of governance: the *panchayat* or village level. However, it may be too early to measure the CBGA's impact at the grassroots level for two reasons. First, most of the CBGA's crucial initiatives in this area are still in progress. Second, the percolation of budget work to the grassroots level requires a broadly based and sustained alliance among all major civil society budget groups in the country. This calls for consolidated efforts by all stakeholders, and the CBGA has already embarked on work in this regard.

### ***Outputs***

Over the last decade, various groups have been undertaking budget analysis in relation to the social sectors, primarily at the state level. At the national level, the CBGA has initiated the process. The CBGA has created awareness about budgets and the economy through *Budget Track* and various reports. It has disseminated information relatively successfully among civil society groups, the media, legislators, policy makers, and academics. Many of its important activities are, however, still under way; however, even in the short span of three years, the CBGA's activities have produced several worthwhile results. Some of the major outputs of the CBGA's activities are as follows:

- The 2004 report on the MPLADS and a subsequent workshop in New Delhi generated sustained debate on the desirability and effectiveness of this scheme. In particular, the CBGA's report was a blistering attack against the scheme on the grounds that it weakened the process of decentralization.
- The 2004 report on the Calamity Relief Fund has been instrumental in drawing the attention of experts and commentators to the financing of state responses to natural disasters.
- The CBGA's responses to Union budgets, the postbudget panel discussions, and the *Budget Track* newsletter have consistently highlighted gaps in the Union government's policy priorities, especially the conservative fiscal thinking adhered to by the government that has constrained its policy space with respect to the social sectors.
- The CBGA has had some success in relation to legislative advocacy in the form of providing research support to some parliamentarians on issues relating to budgets and economic policies. It recently submitted recommendations on the 2005 Disaster Management Bill to the Standing Committee on Home Affairs.
- The February 2005 CBGA "National Workshop on Macroeconomic Priorities and Peoples' Perspectives," which dealt with the Union budget for 2005–06, provided a platform for grassroots organizations from different parts of the country to discuss their opinions on

budgetary policy priorities. The workshop culminated in the submission of a memorandum to the chief economic adviser.

- The CBGA's workshops on budget analysis and advocacy have resulted in heightened awareness on the part of civil society groups in different parts of the country on budgets and the importance of budget work as a tool for pro-poor advocacy.

### ***Institutionalization***

The CBGA has institutional linkages with NGOs, communities, and academics through its capacity-building and awareness-raising workshops. The CBGA is now trying to interact with legislators. To further institutionalize its work, the CBGA plans to build a strong advocacy program with a network of organizations that have capacities to undertake budget analysis both globally and locally (in each state and gradually in each district).

### ***Replication and Scaling Up***

A prerequisite for expanding the CBGA's budget work (as well as the strategic use of budget information for advocacy) is a combined effort by civil society groups across the country. The CBGA recognizes the need for concerted efforts in this direction and has accordingly planned activities to bring together budget groups from different locations, and a program to launch civil society budget work on a national scale.

*Sources:* Behar and Mohanty 2005; CBGA 2003, 2005; Das and Jha 2004; Mohanty 2004; Web site of the National Centre for Advocacy Studies (<http://www.ncasindia.org>).

## **BUDGET ANALYSIS, ACTIONAID INTERNATIONAL NEPAL**

Nepal's history of polarized politics has played a significant role in shaping the nature and extent of civil society activities in this Himalayan kingdom. The governance structure has historically been a closed system with no avenues for civil society participation. The democratic reforms of the 1990s and the transition to democracy have been slow and erratic. Complicating the transition has been weak development of an active civil society, frequent cycles of political instability, and deeply entrenched social divisions.

### ***Scope and Description of the Initiative***

ActionAid International is an international development charity that was founded in London in 1972. ActionAid International Nepal (AIN), the country unit of the international charity, which was founded a decade later, is a leading CSO committed to strengthening capacity among grassroots organizations in Nepal. It focuses on poverty reduction and is currently active in 36 districts across the country, where it supports a wide array of rights-based and advocacy-focused programs. However, as a rights-based agency, the AIN believes that it has an impact in all districts in Nepal (in total, the AIN engages with more than 200 NGOs, alliances, networks, and forums across the country).

The AIN has worked through local grassroots organizations, emphasizing microlevel interventions, in addition to using advocacy at the policy level, which is just as important to effectively address poverty-related issues. In this context, focusing on the national budget was a natural progression. This emergent emphasis on addressing budgets was in line with growing interest in recent years among Nepalese NGOs and journalists in analyzing the national annual budget from various perspectives and recommending allocation patterns for the forthcoming year.

The AAIN's work on budgets, initiated in 1998 on an exploratory, project-focused basis, was the first program of its kind in the country. Since then it has become a collaborative initiative, tapping into networks and partner groups across the country. Nevertheless, budget openness still has a long way to go in Nepal. To begin with, the public does not know the exact timetable for budget preparation and release ahead of time. The government normally makes this information public only a month before the date the budget will be announced. In addition, the government has limited consultations with experts and the general public during budget formulation, and the prebudget consultations held with parliamentarians are not open to the media or to the public. Finally, the government does not publicly release a prebudget document or statement or hold public hearings on the macroeconomic and fiscal framework presented in the budget, which could encourage public debate on the budget and how it affects the economy. However, distinct opportunities exist for change to occur in relation to the government's lack of accountability and transparency as part of the restructuring of the state tied to the ongoing peace process and conflict resolution.

In 1998, the AAIN began its foray into budget analysis through a partnership with Developing Initiatives for Social and Human Action, an Indian NGO with vast experience in budget analysis and advocacy and a pro-poor focus. The focus of the AAIN's initial budget-related work has been to examine the national budget with emphasis on the shares of social expenditures. However, in 2001, the AAIN sponsored another resource group, Backward Society Education, to conduct local or community-level budget analysis in some villages in the Kailali district in west Nepal. This new intervention resulted in a total rethinking of the AAIN's work on budgets, as a result of which it began supporting a variety of initiatives at different levels and scales.

The AAIN's activities are aimed at various audiences. Its national budget analysis is targeted at national-level policy makers, parliamentarians, NGOs, and journalists. Its local-level budget analysis is aimed at local government officials, local NGOs, and community groups. Finally, the results of its open budget study (discussed later) are targeted at national-level journalists, NGOs, policy makers, and donors.

### ***Objectives***

Through its budget work, the AAIN aims to build in-country capacity, as well as interest in and coalitions for future independent budget analysis work. From 2007, it aims to broaden and deepen independent, applied budget analysis in Nepal. In particular, it plans to look into allocations for social spending in the national budget, now under threat, because the deteriorating security situation has resulted in larger sums of money being channeled to the military.

### ***Tools and Approaches***

The AAIN draws on a wide repertoire of social accountability tools—community mobilization and training, lobbying, and survey research—to conduct the following budget work:

- *Community situation analysis and participatory baseline studies.* The AAIN's engagement at the microlevel is continuous and draws heavily on participatory techniques and approaches. It regularly organizes training on participatory approaches and methods in an attempt to empower community members to assess their situation and to develop solutions to local problems. Community baseline data are gathered through local grassroots organizations. The AAIN also conducts regular social audits, participatory planning, and budgeting exercises with its NGO partner affiliates in 36 districts across the country. Though not formal budget analysis as such, these efforts have helped enhance public awareness of the budget and analytical competencies in relation to it.

- *Lobbying on policy.* The AAIN has been actively involved in engaging the national government in relation to reforms in policies and practices, especially those that affect poverty. The scope of this engagement has enlarged over the years, and today the organization looks not only at national policies, but also the impact on Nepal of policies designed by the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization, with which the AAIN does not always agree.
- *Open budget study.* In 2004, the AAIN had an opportunity to collaborate with a global partner, the International Budget Project (IBP), to conduct a country-specific study on open budgets with the Strategic Group. The open budget questionnaire built on the efforts of multilateral agencies, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's best practices for budget transparency, the International Monetary Fund's revised code of good practices on fiscal transparency, and the International Organization of Supreme Auditing Institutions' Lima Declaration on Guidelines on Auditing Precepts. The questionnaire focuses on the openness of the budget process in national contexts.

The national budget analysis entailed the production of independent and people-centered analysis of the national budget for three years running, looking at the distribution of public funds under different budget headings (which is also what the village budget analyses did). The AAIN used its in-house expertise and voluntary contributions of articles and analyses by others. It interacted with parliamentarians to share its findings with them. It also held capacity-building programs that aimed to generate understanding (at least in Kathmandu) of what the budget is, what a participatory budget would be, and so on. The relationship between the Citizens' Poverty Watch Forum and the AAIN was deeper than the typical relationship between donor and recipient in that the AAIN was represented on the forum's board. However, it was not possible for the Citizens' Poverty Watch Forum to engage in year-round budget work. The forum ended up focusing only on budget analysis around the time of the budget's release midyear.

The AAIN's partner, Backward Society Education, carried out the work on local budget analysis. Work was undertaken in three villages during a roughly nine-month period in 2001–02. The work involved (a) informing the community and local government officials of the nature of the work; (b) forming the team for research at the village level; (c) procuring budget documents on local budgets; (d) carrying out budget analysis by looking at allocations and budget distribution, analyzing disbursement processes and problems faced, and assessing the overall impact of government spending in various sectors; (e) preparing a report on the findings; (f) sharing the findings with the communities and with local government officials and incorporating their comments; and (g) sharing the findings at a South Asia-level civil society and budget analysis meeting held in Kathmandu in June 2002. The resulting analysis was fairly rudimentary. It was restricted to a simple breakdown of local budgets in each of the three villages with some analysis of implementation processes and some conclusions about the impact of public expenditure programs on the lives of poor people.

The open budget survey involved analysis of the budget-making process in its entirety: from formulation to execution to monitoring to auditing. The open budget questionnaire as completed by the researchers included 122 multiple-choice questions. The questions were organized into two main categories: one examined the contents of the executive's budget proposal and the other covered the documents and processes of the different phases of the budget (executive formulation, legislative approval, execution and monitoring, and audit and evaluation). The questionnaire was based on the recognition that civil society-led budget groups were entirely dependent on public information for their ability to comment on the budget and its execution. Thus the focus was on the quality of information provided by the government and the availability of reports that would enable civil society to assess the extent to which goals embodied in the budget have been realized.

### ***Partners and Stakeholders***

For the Kathmandu-based national budget analysis, the AAIN partnered with the Citizens' Poverty Watch Forum, a body that emerged out of an AAIN, World Bank, and National Planning Commission workshop on poverty held in 1998. The forum began as an informal group of independent professionals and journalists interested in working on poverty policy issues. Its foray into budget analysis began in 1999, and in 2000, forum members attended the "IBP Asia Conference on Budget Analysis" held in Mumbai.

Starting in 2000–01, the AAIN undertook the analysis of local budgets with a grassroots NGO, Backward Society Education, which was working in the plains of far western Nepal. Backward Society Education's main area of work had been empowerment of the Tharu community, members of which had been bonded laborers for centuries.

As for the open budget survey, the initiative is being undertaken by the Strategic Group, a nongovernmental research group that has previously worked on a World Bank project on public expenditure issues. The AAIN first partnered with the Strategic Group in 2003 to test the draft IBP questionnaire, then in 2004 to carry out the IBP survey on open budgets, and once again in 2005 for a slightly scaled-up version of the survey.

In relation to its governance strategy, the AAIN emphasizes the importance of building the capacities of its partner NGOs and plans to strengthen its partnership with existing grassroots organizations.

### ***Resources***

The AAIN funded the national and local budget analyses, with logistical contributions provided by partner organizations, a policy research group in Kathmandu, and a grassroots activist organization. The IBP has financed the open budget questionnaire. As the work requires technical skills, researchers are employed to conduct the analysis and their fees are borne by the IBP. The AAIN has joined forces with the IBP and the Strategic Group to form a tripartite partnership that ensures technical guidance (from the IBP), quality control (by the AAIN), and action (by the AAIN and the Strategic Group).

### ***Constraints and Problems***

The AAIN's open budget study initiative and similar interventions at the national and local levels faced the following critical constraints and problems:

- *Inexperience with conducting surveys.* The AAIN had no prior experience in designing a budget questionnaire, and there were several rounds of consultations within the team, as well as with the questionnaire formulators, on some of the answers. For example, if a budget document was available on the Internet, the IBP may have felt that this would mean that the document was readily accessible by the public, but given the low levels of Internet penetration and extremely poor access in Nepal, the AAIN would have given such a document a less favorable rating in relation to its availability in the public domain.
- *Difficulties in accessing data.* The AAIN had difficulty in obtaining the proper data, especially at the local level. This was overcome to some extent by linking organizations assigned to carry out budget work at the local level with those based in Kathmandu to facilitate a smoother exchange of information. This, however, increased the time taken to finalize the document.

- *Need to enhance representation.* The technical nature of the initiative did not allow for greater public involvement, especially of vulnerable and marginalized populations. This was reflected in the low level of citizen participation at meetings, presentations, and so on.
- *Weak institutionalization.* The effort to move from a one-off intervention to regular, sustained budget work has been a problem. Even though local organizations have been sensitized to the potency of budget analysis and have participated in many interventions, most of them are still reluctant to carry out similar efforts on their own. However, the AAIN's experience with the Economic Literacy and Budget Analysis Group in other countries shows that transition to regular budget work is feasible after all. In relation to its governance strategy, the AAIN has now committed to sustained budget work.

A key issue that needs to be addressed is how to make the budget work more inclusive. While the community baseline studies are inclusive, the analysis per se could not involve the general public. To increase public participation, the AAIN has decided to expand the core group of researchers and to include more NGOs with grassroots bases and access. It also intends to add public consultation to this line of work. The AAIN is also contemplating other activities, such as social audits at the grassroots level, participatory review and reflection exercises with local communities, and a nationwide initiative to increase economic literacy among partner organizations. In this way, it would seek to increase inclusion not just in its budget work, but also by supplementing this work with other activities.

### ***Outputs***

Through its pioneering intervention on budget analysis, the AAIN has set in place the primary building blocks to introduce social accountability concepts and tools in Nepal. Some of the emergent outputs include the following:

- *Promoting budget analysis.* The AAIN's pioneering work has helped promote the use of budget analysis as an important mechanism for achieving a more democratic society. Civil society is now recognized for its role in striving for open budgets. Trial and error has helped the AAIN develop a deeper and more focused program for budget analysis work. In the initial stages, there was no specific or focused agenda for budget analysis and activities were ad hoc, but with the help of other organizations, such as the Centre for Budget and Policy Studies in Bangalore, India, and of the IBP, the AAIN has become more focused. Strengthening its partnerships with these and other organizations has enabled the AAIN to move on to its next phase of work.
- *Strengthening informal networks.* By getting them involved, the AAIN's activities strengthened the informal network of budget analysts, policy makers, journalists, academics, and NGOs. This technical core is now seen as an important conduit for reaching hitherto neglected and voiceless groups and making advocacy informed and potent.
- *Building local capacity.* The capacity-building component of the budget analysis was new and innovative. It involved building the capacity of the partner NGO, providing community-level education on budget issues, and making local government officials sensitive to budget issues.
- *Initiating partnerships with the media.* In the AAIN's budget analysis work, journalists have played an important role in disseminating its findings and in using them for advocacy purposes. The organization has trained journalists on budget-related issues, given indications that journalists' lack of specialized knowledge had resulted in poor coverage and presentation of its reports. It also invites media professionals to visit its chapters in rural areas and to

attend events. The core messages of the events are well covered in local newspapers (both in the Nepalese and English language press).

- *Forging partnerships and networks.* The AAIN has realized the benefits of forging partnerships with international organizations such as the Asian Development Bank. While the AAIN enjoys close relationships with its communities in all districts where it operates, it can also tap the Asian Development Bank's vast knowledge bank. Avenues for more collaborative work are being explored.

### ***Institutionalization***

To institutionalize budget work and build local capacity, the AAIN has planned Economic Literacy and Budget Analysis Group training during 2007 in three resource centers in cooperation with its partner NGOs. The Economic Literacy and Budget Analysis Group project foresees a four-phase plan that seeks to benefit AAIN staff, partner NGOs, and poor and excluded communities through training, action research, media advocacy, and reflection. The Economic Literacy and Budget Analysis Group's focus on the need for economic literacy and right to information aims at empowering the poor and excluded to control and influence government budget-making policy, make claims, and work to prevent corruption. The AAIN pioneered the so-called reflect methodology, which is an approach to learning and social transformation that won an award from the United Nations. The AAIN will also use this methodology to raise awareness of corruption and plan and implement local initiatives to combat corruption.

### ***Replication and Scaling Up***

The AAIN's national budget analysis work continued for three years and ended in 2002. The village-level budget analysis faced difficulties, primarily because of difficulties in accessing budget documents, and the work was discontinued after a year.

Many partner NGOs have planned to undertake community-level budget tracking in 2007. Nine partner NGOs from three resource centers are expected to undertake budget analysis after the training planned for January 2007. The network of these partner NGOs is also expected to work on national budget analysis.

*Sources:* ActionAid Nepal 2005; International Budget Project 2004; Strategic Group and ActionAid International Nepal 2005.

## **PARTICIPATORY GENDER BUDGET FORMULATION AND GENDER BUDGET ANALYSIS, INDONESIAN WOMEN'S COALITION FOR JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY**

After three decades of being suppressed under the previous regime, Indonesian women are once more a force for change. When the Suharto regime came to power in 1965, it not only destroyed mass women's organizations like the Indonesian Women's Movement, but transformed the basis of women's participation in the political process. The regime's propaganda claimed that the Indonesian Women's Movement was an organization of prostitutes and legitimized a massacre of its members in 1965–66. In the last years of the Suharto regime, former Indonesian Women's Movement members released from prison became the inspiration for the new women's movement that emerged in the 1980s. By the end of the regime, the women's movement was a broadly based social movement with growing influence over sociopolitical events.

The Indonesian Women's Coalition for Justice and Democracy (Koalisi Perempuan Indonesia or KPI) was established on May 18, 1998, in Jakarta, one day before Suharto resigned. It was founded by a group of 75 women activists as part of a people's reform movement against the Suharto regime. The

KPI held its first congress in Yogyakarta in December 1998 to gain wider recognition and to obtain a mandate from women across Indonesia. More than 500 women from 25 provinces met to take stock of the legacy of the Suharto regime and to chart future directions for women in the country.

In the post-Suharto period, enabling legislation like the Law on Local Government (22/1999) has given local governments more power and autonomy. The key features of the Law on Local Government are the devolution of a wide range of public service delivery functions to the regions and the strengthening of the elected regional councils, which received wide-ranging powers to supervise and control the regional administration. The law bases regional autonomy on five fundamental principles: democracy, people's participation and empowerment, equity and justice, recognition of the potential and diversity of regions, and need to strengthen the regional legislatures. As a result, it strengthened people's ability to demand accountability from the executive branch of government.

However, in the face of structural and cultural obstacles, local governments have thwarted all attempts to realize gender equity. As a result, Indonesia's emergent decentralized structure has ensured that power is concentrated in the hands of local elites. These are groups that have traditionally maintained power in communities and have wielded that power to retain control over community resources. Furthermore, their traditional, conservative nature prevents them from hearing women's voices in public forums or caring about women's issues.

### ***Scope and Description of the Initiative***

A motivating factor for the KPI's involvement in budget work was the noninclusive process of budget formulation, which can best be described as "gender blind," in that it ignores the different socially determined roles, responsibilities, and capabilities of men and women. Under a gender blind budgeting system, fewer financial resources are generally allocated to women, creating inequality and leaving them at a disadvantage in society. The lack of monitoring and evaluation of gender equality programs contributes to the underachievement and lack of sustainability of gender equality policies, institutions, and programs.

Therefore the KPI's core programs aim to establish strong and independent women's organizations that have bargaining power in relation to policy formulation and implementation. Its programs also aim to improve women's capacities. These include various types of training to enable women to play key roles in decision-making bodies. Thus the KPI's programs tackle the root cause of the problem: that women are neglected in the decision-making process and are viewed as second-class citizens.

### ***Objectives***

Given women's lack of involvement in the budgetary process at any level—village, city, provincial, or national—the key objective of the KPI's Participatory Gender Budget Program is to empower women to participate actively in budget-related activities, particularly at the decision-making level. Women's lack of participation in public life is perpetuated by the Constitution, which states that a woman's duty centers on her husband and children. These circumstances mean that women are disadvantaged in the economic, social, political, and cultural spheres.

### ***Tools and Approaches***

The KPI employs the following strategies in its gender budget program:

- *Enhancing women's political involvement.* A key approach adopted by the KPI is enhancing women's political literacy by means of focused motivational and educational campaigns to encourage them to run for local public office.

- *Encouraging women's participation in drafting local budgets.* The KPI firmly believes that a key requirement for ensuring that gender is taken into account in the budget process is to ensure women's active involvement in drafting local budgets.
- *Undertaking gender budget analysis.* Demystifying technical documents such as budgets is an essential step for highlighting issues of inequity and accountability. The KPI believes that a scientific analysis of the budget through a gender lens is a tool for engaging in informed advocacy with the aim of bringing about legislative and policy changes.
- *Providing gender budget training.* The KPI's gender budget training targets women across society, including indigenous, elderly, and professional women; informal workers, laborers, and migrant workers; rural and urban poor women; prostitutes; students; widows and other single women; marginalized girls; farmers and fisher people; housewives; lesbians, bisexual women, and transgender women; and disabled women. The KPI's program is thus extremely inclusive.

The KPI provides training at every level of its organizational structure. It conducts political education training for women in communities in 13 provinces. It includes basic budget literacy in its civic education modules, and has even adapted a budget advocacy game, whereby groups determine the best budget advocacy strategies for different scenarios. The KPI has also conducted gender budget workshops for government officials in West Sumatra, East Java, and Jakarta.

The KPI has used its knowledge and skills pertaining to budget analysis to extend and strengthen its ongoing policy advocacy. A key lesson has been that budgets are a critical ingredient for enforcing legislation. For example, the KPI's Domestic Violence Bill allocates funds for health, justice, and other sectors concerned with fighting domestic violence.

### ***Partners and Stakeholders***

To maximize the impact of its women's budget advocates, the KPI collaborates and networks with organizations that share the same goals and vision. For example, it has collaborated with FITRA to publish a guide to budget advocacy and has also partnered with women's organizations working in the field of policy advocacy. As part of its larger objective of incorporating a gender perspective into the budgetary process, the KPI has established a network for advocacy in relation to the government budget.

### ***Resources***

The coalition is funded by two organizations: the Dutch Institute for Development Cooperation and the Development and Peace Partnership of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

### ***Constraints and Problems***

Despite training and awareness programs, the representation of women in the legislative domain continues to be insufficient. Moreover, the KPI has yet to develop an aggressive, feminist character to appeal to women in general and highlight gender issues in an effective manner. The fact that the KPI is largely a volunteer-based organization has slowed down the gender budget movement. Apart from a few core members, women in local chapters contribute their spare time on a voluntary basis.

### ***Outputs***

The ongoing work of the KPI has resulted in a number of positive outputs that include the following:

- *Influence on policy making.* Through its budget-related policy and advocacy work, the KPI has been able to exert influence on policy making at the national and local levels, for example:
  - The Ministry of the Empowerment of Women adopted a draft of the national plan of action on women’s empowerment that the KPI had provided.
  - A draft of the constitutional amendment regarding human, women’s, and children’s rights was adopted by parliament in 2000.
  - The suggestion to hold women’s caucuses in the national and some local parliaments was adopted by female members of parliament.
  - The members of one KPI community-level representative body were able to bring about a local government policy responsive to gender issues.
  - A training module concerning leadership in relation to gender perspectives is used nationwide, particularly by KPI members.
- *Empowerment of women.* The KPI’s gender budget activities have resulted in greater empowerment of its members, many of whom have successfully run for public office, while others have begun to question the decisions of local bodies in relation to budget allocations. KPI members at the regional and community levels have become members of government budget planning teams and of the Electoral Commission. Increasing numbers of KPI members have succeeded in gaining positions on village and city councils, while others have run for positions in district, provincial, and national legislatures. At the community level, women have acquired the courage to question the basis on which local governments have formulated their budgets. At the regional level, women have been able to efficiently perform their roles as budget advocates as a result of KPI training.
- *Greater awareness among political elite.* The KPI’s policy advocacy activities have increased awareness among elected representatives and the bureaucracy about the necessity for a gender perspective in planning and decision making.

### ***Institutionalization***

The KPI’s gender budget activities have been recognized by the government, and KPI members are active in various government programs. The KPI has established the Caucus of Parliamentarian Women at the national level. The KPI has also been involved in policy making and programs of the Ministry for the Empowerment of Women. In addition, the KPI is part of the international network Women in Politics and is registered as an organization that supports the Women Building Peace movement based in London.

### ***Replication and Scaling Up***

The KPI’s activities have been scaled up and its current membership stands at 15,000 women from 17 groups across the country. The KPI’s 23 chapters are located at the national, regional, provincial, district, and village levels.

*Sources:* Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy 2004; Sen 1999; Siahaan 2002.

## **Engaging and Empowering Communities for Public Service Improvements**

Emergent narratives on social accountability in Asia are interestingly nuanced by gradual, but growing, examples of increasing community participation in the domain of governance and service delivery. Some of these initiatives have come from proactive governments, indicating that state-civil

society dialectics can complement and open up new windows for ushering in new and innovative partnerships.

### **SIRAJGANJ LOCAL GOVERNANCE DEVELOPMENT FUND PROJECT, BANGLADESH**

Bangladesh has one of the most centralized public sector governance and service delivery arrangements in the world. After Bangladesh achieved independence in 1971, local government institutions experienced a number of shifts in policy regarding their political, financial, and administrative authority and various tiers of government were established. Currently rural local government bodies are divided into three tiers, namely, local councils (union *parishads*), the lowest tier; subdistrict administrations (*upazila parishads*), the middle tier; and district administrations (*zila parishads*), the topmost tier. The subdistrict administrations and district administrations have no direct political representation, but local councils have 12 elected representatives for an average population of 28,800.

Local government is a highly viable mechanism through which democratic processes and practices can be established and participatory development ensured. Historically, however, local government in Bangladesh has remained weak and susceptible to pressures exerted by the central government. Through the years, local government institutions have been struggling for sufficient fiscal and administrative power. They are also constrained by lack of transparency, low capacity, excessive bureaucracy, political interference, limited authority, lack of accountability of service providers, and weak financial resources and have limited orientation toward local communities.

Moreover, the representative local governance structures, such as the local councils in particular, were lacking in terms of their transparency and accountability. After being elected, local council representatives mostly felt accountable to the subdistrict administrations or their district bureaucratic bosses rather than to their communities. They did not practice transparent systems like open budget meetings, rarely consulted communities on the planning and implementation of development projects, and services provided to communities were of extremely poor quality. In addition, corruption was rampant among local council representatives. This poor governance contributed directly to pervasive poverty.

#### ***Scope and Description of the Initiative***

Sirajganj is a large district located on the west bank of the Jamuna River with a population of 2.5 million people. Sirajganj comprises nine subdistrict administrations and 81 local councils. Parts of the district are prone to erosion, while others are low-lying and prone to flooding. The literacy rate is 27 percent and the district is one of the poorest in Bangladesh, according to the UNDP's human development index.

In an innovative effort to reduce poverty by encouraging local governance initiatives, the Sirajganj Local Governance Development Fund Project (SLGDFP) was launched in 2000 and was completed in December 2005. The project was cofunded by the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), the UNDP, and the government of Bangladesh. The trigger for this partnership, however, came from recommendations made by the local government commission's reports of 1991 and 1997. The key recommendations included the following:

- The local councils should have greater fiscal and administrative authority.
- A certain number of local council seats should be reserved for women.
- The areas (unions) overseen by local councils should be divided into nine wards.
- The local councils should be the lowest administrative unit.

- The local councils should be provided with adequate staff.
- The people should participate in decision making.
- The resources for local councils should be mobilized locally.
- A fiscal commission should oversee local government institutions.

These recommendations gave rise to demand for stronger local councils and for fiscal and administrative decentralization, including people’s participation in local-level decision making. This enabling environment provided a window of opportunity for the UNDP and UNCDF to come up with the idea of the SLGDFP, the first initiative of its kind in Bangladesh. The UNCDF and the UNPD initiated the project in three phases. The first phase included 19 local councils, 9 were added in the second phase, and 45 more were added in the third phase.

The project had three components, namely: (a) the investment of local development funds to improve service delivery at the local level, (b) the enhancement of the capacity of local councils in Sirajganj to improve their performance, and (c) the dissemination of the findings and the lessons learned. A key feature of the project was the disbursement of funds directly to participating local councils on an annual block grant basis. The local councils had the power to plan and decide on the allocation of this annual flow of investment funds to sustainable development activities within project-defined guidelines. The project monitored the performance of local councils in the use of the funds. To create incentives, the SLGDFP introduced a performance grant component, whereby eligibility for grant funding during the second and subsequent years of the project depended on the local council’s participatory performance appraisal or scorecard (table 1), which is a rating of performance by communities.

**Table 1 Sample Scorecard**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Performance indicator</b>	<b>Score to be obtained</b>	<b>Actual score</b>
Involvement of women in the local council’s activities	All women local council representatives are present during all regular meetings of the local council and during meetings of standing committees Women members attend 50 to 80 percent of meetings Women participate in fewer than 50 percent of meetings		
Control of tax defaulters	A list of tax defaulters is prepared and updated every year A list of tax defaulters is not prepared		
Community participation in the budget process	The budget is prepared with the involvement of community groups at open meetings and inputs are obtained from the wards The budget is prepared without any significant contribution from the community		
Project implementation	Schemes have been implemented in line with their timetables Schemes have not been implemented in line with their timetables		
Budget transparency	Information on the final budget is provided to citizens through notice boards and other means No information on the final budget is provided		

Source: SLGDFP.

## **Objectives**

The key objectives of the SLGDFP were as follows:

- To ensure transparent, accountable local councils that would contribute to poverty reduction in rural Bangladesh
- To deliver sustainable basic infrastructure and public services in Sirajganj that were in accord with local priorities and contributed to poverty alleviation and socioeconomic development
- To build the capacity of elected bodies in Sirajganj in relation to planning, financing, and managing service delivery in response to local needs
- To ensure that the voices of the poor and marginalized were heard, especially those of women
- To apply lessons learned on innovative ways to plan, finance, and manage services to the government reform process in Bangladesh as a whole

The target audience of the SLGDFP was rural communities, with focus on the poor and on women. The central government was also targeted for policy change, with the objective of promoting accountable, transparent, and strong local governments. At the local level, local councils were targeted as the main actors for the accountability exercise. The sectors targeted were the development of local infrastructure and local service delivery (education, health, agriculture, and so on).

## **Tools and Approaches**

The SLGDFP pursued an interesting mix of learning-by-doing from performance assessment tools to community mobilization approaches. Whereas the former brought in the capability for measurement and comparison, the latter ensured sustained community engagement and involvement in the entire process.

***Participatory Performance Assessments of Local Councils.*** Participatory performance assessments—public scorecards—reveal the strengths and weaknesses of local councils by grading them on a number of criteria. The assessments were done once a year with the participation of community representatives, of local council bodies, and occasionally of local government officials. Based on the assessments, the local council developed a capacity-building plan.

Initially, the scorecard was developed by the project team based on the roles and functions of local councils. However, over time, the stakeholders changed most of the issues the project team addressed, including the method of project implementation. The participatory performance assessments were undertaken at public meetings attended by 80 to 120 people, facilitated by the local council coordinator. The scorecards were hung on a board and attendees were asked to assess the effectiveness of the local council by judging its performance on a range of activities, including the opening and operation of the local council office, the status of tax collection, its performance in relation to finances and accounts, and its implementation of the SLGDFP. Additional competencies assessed included the extent of participation of female council members, the level of public participation in the budget preparation process, and the operation of the village court. In addition to revealing the level of public participation in local council activities and decisions, this process allowed better dissemination of information on the linkages between compliance with and collection of taxes and service delivery.

Local council chairs and members have commented that for the first time, they could achieve 100 percent efficiency in the use of development funds by avoiding the losses suffered through other development funding channels. As a result of the efficiency in the use of funds, the transparency of the process, and the participation of community members, evidence indicates that local councils find

that revenue mobilization and collection efficiency have increased as community members have a better understanding of how the money is used. In addition, around a third of participating local councils were contributing their own revenues to SLGDFP schemes and two of the local councils were using their own revenues for other schemes identified through the participatory planning process.

***Decentralized and Performance-Based Funding.*** The SLGDFP provided funds directly to local councils on a block grant basis, which the local councils controlled and managed. The performance-based funding criteria are such that those local councils that performed well in the previous year were eligible for additional funding the next year. This has shown that performance improvements can be influenced by incentives. The flow of funds directly to the local councils resulted in decentralization of the decision-making and project scheme selection process.

***Open Budget Sessions.*** The annual income and expenditure statements of the local council were presented at a budget meeting along with the succeeding year's income and expenditure plan. Formerly, the community was not familiar with the local council's budget, as it was not disclosed. Thus the SLGDFP made the budget process transparent. The process started by displaying the draft budget on a notice board. Dates were then set to discuss the draft budget, finalize it, and send it to the deputy commissioner for approval. This gave community members opportunities to review the budget, ask about different income and expenditure items, and suggest changes. As a result, people became aware of the local council's financial status and expenditures patterns. This transparency helped local councils mobilize local resources.

***Scheme Notice Boards and Complaint Books.*** These instruments were used to ensure accountability and transparency. Although the government of Bangladesh requires that information on schemes be publicly displayed, this is seldom done in practice. The SLGDFP supported improved information flows through a contingency fund for project scheme notice boards in all scheme estimates that provided details such as source of funds, work involved, dates, those responsible, and costs. Complaint books were kept at each scheme site to obtain feedback on quality. Similarly, information on the local council (annual plan, list of project schemes, funds received, minutes of meetings, budgets, and so on) was publicized on local council notice boards.

***Enhanced Social Mobilization and Social Inclusion for Community Participation.*** The SLGDFP operated through two key processes: social mobilization and social inclusion. Community mobilization was the central dimension of the SLGDFP, both to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery and to serve a wider objective of strengthening civil society and democratic processes. Given the absence of a prevailing culture of participation within local councils, the SLGDFP supported participation through subdistrict administration project coordinators (full-time project staff), union facilitation teams (volunteers from the community), and ward development committees led by local council members who sat on ward development committees.

Communities were mobilized by means of participatory performance assessment exercises, participatory planning, open budget meetings, project scheme implementation, resource mobilization, and participation in various committees. The committees were organized at open meetings and the community selected members. Meetings took place at the start and the end of the implementation of education, health, and agriculture projects to ensure quality and community ownership.

Participatory planning processes were undertaken at the local council level, with each local council having nine wards. The ward-level participatory planning process was usually a two-day event that involved between 120 and 400 people. The participatory planning process employed such tools as social mapping, problem identification and prioritization, and action planning. On average, 1,100 to

3,000 people participated in the planning exercises, or some 9 to 15 percent of the total population at the local council level. The community was mainly mobilized through an information campaign conducted by local councils using various media, such as drum beating, leaflets, invitation letters, microphone announcements, and personal contacts, all of which are inexpensive and sustainable.

Once mobilization was achieved, an important aspect of the project's institutional arrangements was the capacity building of citizens. Members of committees received technical training on a variety of building and engineering techniques. This enhanced technical knowledge within communities ensured increased levels of accountability.

As concerns social inclusion, the project sought to ensure that women and the poorest were given a voice in the planning process and that their priorities were represented in the final selection of schemes. The chances for elite capture were minimized, as all activities were open, transparent, and targeted toward the poor. In the case of women, it was required that women should prioritize at least 30 percent of project schemes and that local councils' approvals of schemes should maintain this ratio. Various process-based mechanisms reflected participation by women, such as the use of colored cards to show women's needs, special planning groups for women, and screening to ensure that women's interests were met during the final selection. Women were also mobilized through the subdistrict administrations and district women's development forums. However, increasing women's participation continues to remain a challenge.

### ***Partners and Stakeholders***

The SLGDFP relied on a tripartite partnership involving the Local Government Division of the national government, local councils, and the community as follows:

- *Local Government Division of the government of Bangladesh.* The SLGDFP was a government-initiated project and was nationally executed by the Local Government Division, which was also responsible for scaling up the initiative. Project implementation was guided by the National Steering Committee, which was chaired by the secretary of the Local Government Division, and the District Project Advisory and Coordination Committee, chaired by the district commissioner of Sirajganj.
- *Local councils.* The project was implemented through local councils, which were selected through a transparent process using set criteria. For the first year, the criteria included local councils that were open and functional, held monthly meetings, had women representatives who accounted for at least two-thirds of council members, maintained and updated their accounting records, and held annual meetings with the community to assess their performance. Additional criteria as of the second year included opening a bank account for project funds, organizing open budget meetings with community participation, and carrying out tax assessments according to the standard government tax schedule. The selected local councils planned and decided on the allocation of annual block grants in line with project guidelines.
- *Local communities.* Participation by communities in local council activities was a core dimension of the SLGDFP. Community representatives were elected based on their jobs, mainly primary school teachers, religious leaders, family health workers, agriculture block supervisors,<sup>5</sup> women members of NGOs and vulnerable groups, farmers (small and marginal), day laborers, social workers, and civil society representatives. The objective of

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<sup>5</sup> A block is the unit of institutional services for farmers. Each block has one block supervisor to provide extension services to farm families.

having representatives with a variety of backgrounds was to ensure that people from all walks of life (and from all wards) participated in local council activities.

### ***Resources***

As noted earlier, the project was jointly funded by the UNDP and the UNCDF, and had a total cost of around US\$9 million over 2000–05. Toward the end of the project, contributions from the UNCDF decreased, and the UNDP stepped in to fill the gap. Some initiatives, such as open budget meetings, were funded by the local councils themselves. While the two funding agencies had largely provided the financial resources, the facilitation and analytical skills had been procured largely from the communities. Although voluntary support was available, it was insufficient. As regards leadership, the role of the local council chair was crucial, because the 1983 Local Government Act bestows most decision-making responsibilities on the chair. Thus a responsive, accountable, transparent, and versatile chair plays an important role in efficient community mobilization.

### ***Constraints and Problems***

The SLGDGP's learning-by-doing approach offered many lessons that allowed the problems and constraints encountered to be taken into account for scaling up and replication of this approach. These problems and constraints included the following:

- *Political interference by legislators.* The highly centralized political framework has resulted in members of parliament being able to exert considerable influence and control that they exercise in a manner akin to political patronage. Resource allocations from higher tiers of government to local bodies are often determined by personal or political party needs in a nontransparent manner. To avoid political interference, project funds were channeled directly to local councils and decisions to approve project schemes were made at the union level. All information regarding funds, schemes, and plans was made available to all community members through scheme notice boards and community gatherings.
- *Mindset of bureaucrats.* At the initial stage of the SLGDGP, bureaucrats were not very interested in empowering local councils and communities and were skeptical about local council representatives being able to approve project schemes and being responsible for funds received and disbursed and about the involvement of women members. They were loath to believe that local councils could work in the interests of the people. Bureaucrats also expressed their concern that the SLGDGP would create greater opportunities for corruption within local councils. Over time, however, the bureaucrats came to see the potential of local councils in providing better services to communities.
- *Lack of awareness among community members.* Community members are not sufficiently informed about the roles and functions of local councils. This lack of awareness is a direct result of the considerable gap between public service providers and the users of such services. In an attempt to address this issue, community awareness programs were organized under the SLGDGP that employed such means as folk songs, theater, leaflets, notice boards, scheme information boards, and posters.

### ***Outputs***

The SLGDGP achieved a number of important results, namely:

- *Financing infrastructure service delivery.* The project established a system of providing predictable annual capital grants to local councils. The funds were controlled at this level, which has elected leaders, whereas under the government's Annual Development Program, funds are controlled at the subdistrict level, which has no elected officials and is just an administrative level of government.

- *Planning and budgeting for infrastructure service delivery.* The project recognized that local councils had no prevailing culture of participation and that changing attitudes and institutionalizing participation can only be achieved incrementally.
- *General accountability and monitoring mechanisms.* Improving accountability is closely linked to the promotion of participatory processes, as well as to establishment of a community organization structure. However, the SLGDP also undertook a range of other innovations that further served to strengthen and institutionalize greater accountability, including the annual performance review process and improved information flows.
- *Policy impact.* The government requested the UNCDF and UNDP to replicate the project in five other districts as of 2004 and committed government funding for local councils as of fiscal 2005 on an increasing scale for five years.

Specific outputs of the SLGDFP included the following:

- *Local councils in the project area have gained the trust of communities.* The project achieved significant results and was appreciated by communities, local government representatives, the national government, and donors. This was a result of local ownership and involvement in the implementation of SLGDFP schemes.
- *Local councils have become more transparent and accountable.* The provision of funding directly to local councils made them accountable to communities, and the project developed a range of mechanisms that served to ensure the flow of information to communities. The system of regularly monitoring and reporting on the performance of the local councils contributed to their improved performance.
- *Services have improved.* A study by the Asian Development Bank and the UNCDF shows a significant improvement in the performance of decentralized service provision under the SLGDFP. These improvements are particularly marked in the area of construction and rehabilitation of community assets, such as roads, paths, culverts, and tube wells. Under the block grant mechanism, development planning and spending was more efficient than under the previous arrangement. This resulted in improved services for communities and better access by the poor. Moreover, the implementation and supervision process resulted in high quality of work done under the SLGDFP.
- *Community members have more access to local decision-making processes.* There was a sense of community ownership of the project. The establishment of standing committees consisting of members of local councils and selected citizens ensured community representation and participation. Communities began to raise more questions about various development activities undertaken by local councils and adopted schemes that had numerous benefits for the poor.
- *Funds are being used in an optimal manner.* The project ensured the optimum and efficient use of funds. This is, in part, due to the substantial degree of autonomy in the SLGDFP block grant mechanism, which resulted in improved performance in meeting budget targets. This resulted in better quality projects being implemented than in the past.
- *More local resources are being mobilized for local development.* This is another dimension of people's participation, and one that improved the quality of the final output. Because communities were involved, they were willing to contribute to improve the quality of the work. Examples include cash contributions, provision of additional free labor, and greater willingness to provide land for works.

- *Women's voices are being heard.* The project ensured greater opportunities for women to raise their voices and be heard. Care was taken to ensure that women were involved in every stage of the process, especially in relation to planning and through the requirement that at least one-third of project schemes addressed women's needs.
- *The extent of corruption is being reduced.* Given the lack of data, the actual extent to which corruption has been reduced is hard to gauge, but reports from communities, local council representatives, and other stakeholders indicate that in case of SLGDFP schemes, fiscal leakages were reduced to as low as 5 to 10 percent of total expenditures, compared with 40 to 50 percent for schemes under annual development plans. In addition, the reduction in corruption has meant that project schemes were of higher quality and longer lasting than those implemented under annual development plans.

### ***Institutionalization***

The project had close linkages with local NGOs, actors in local government reform, and international and bilateral aid agencies. Recently, the European Commission, the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the U.K. Department for International Development, the Danish International Development Agency, and the World Bank began to show interest in implementing local governance initiatives based on lessons learned from the SLGDFP.

The initial success of the project has encouraged the government to revise the tax schedule and strategies for local councils. The government requested the UNCDF to replicate the project in other districts, thereby enabling local governments to assimilate the practices of the SLGDFP. In addition, the Local Government Division had already internalized and implemented the performance assessment system, and based on the results, the government provided a 10 percent bonus to the best-performing local government institutions in the same way as the SLGDFP provided bonuses to the best-performing local councils.

Another important outcome of the SLGDFP is that the central government has begun to seriously consider devolving more authority to local governments. The minister of local government has already taken steps to empower local councils by providing them with direct block grants. The *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper* identified local government institutions as the key vehicle for providing services to communities, and therefore stressed decentralization.

To internalize the system, the central government has already asked the UNCDF to replicate the project in other districts. Performance-based funding, direct funding to local councils, open budget sessions, and participatory planning processes have been much appreciated by international and bilateral aid agencies and local government actors.

A core issue for wider replication of the SLGDFP approach is institutional support for the development of local councils. Government departments should take the lead in providing the supporting and monitoring role that will be required as part of a wider rolling out of this project. Government structures that have an important part to play in training and capacity building, funding, and resource development of local councils must gear up accordingly.

### ***Replication and Scaling Up***

The project ended in December 2005, but an agreement between the central government and the UNCDF stipulated replication of the project in six other districts from 2006, when the project will provide less technical assistance. The government has also agreed to implement lessons learned from

the replication project throughout the country to ensure that the project's innovations will be sustained not only in Sirajganj, but nationwide.

Building on the experience of the SLDGFP, the World Bank has approved a US\$111.5 million credit to support a government program to develop an accountable local governance system for local councils. The SLDGFP showed that local government-led projects save time and money in providing basic services to the poor and that development outcomes improve when communities participate in decision making and are able to hold their local governments to account for their performance, as evidenced by stronger own-revenue mobilization and low levels of fund leakage.

*Sources:* GHK International 2004; World Bank 2006; Web site of the UNCDF (<http://www.uncdf.org/english/index.php>); UNDP fact sheet (<http://www.un-bd.org/undp/factsheets/Sirajgonj.pdf>).

### **CITIZENS' CHARTERS FOR PUBLIC SERVICE ACCOUNTABILITY, PEOPLE'S POWER, INDIA**

People's Power (Lok Satta) is a nonpartisan movement that advocates reforms of the governance structure. Set up in 1997, People's Power's believes that people are the true "owners" of a democracy and that the responsibility of every official, however highly placed, is to serve the people. Although People's Power's grassroots organizations, which have a total of more than 100,000 members, are limited to the state of Andhra Pradesh, the overarching goal of People's Power is national, in that it seeks to place citizens at the center of India's democracy by joining the movement for governance reforms, and as an advocacy body and think tank, People's Power's reach is national. People's Power has initiated many successful reform initiatives, which started off as citizen efforts but were later incorporated in a broad framework for reform. One example is the initiative to disclose the financial and criminal records of electoral candidates, which India's Election Commission recently endorsed and put into practice.

The driving force behind the citizens' charter initiative is the increasing helplessness of citizens in India's modern democracy. Low levels of accountability and transparency among civil servants, compounded by often obsolete laws and rules, have resulted in pervasive corruption and an utter disregard for public satisfaction, especially with regard to public service delivery. A relatively high degree of centralization of government structures and a view of government officials as dispensers of patronage have exacerbated the situation. In addition, low levels of education, lack of access to information, few or no avenues for interaction between citizens and government officials, and little in the way of collective action (in part owing to people's lack of awareness of their rights) have contributed to the shift of power away from the hands of the people. To address this lack of "citizen-centric" governance, in 1997 People's Power launched the concept of citizens' charters<sup>6</sup> to introduce a culture of accountability among government departments of the state of Andhra Pradesh.

#### ***Scope and Description of the Initiative***

The initial phase of the People's Power initiative was mostly advocacy based. This meant writing articles for newspapers and magazines and communicating the idea of charters to people through speeches and discussion forums. During this phase, in 1998, People's Power meticulously researched

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<sup>6</sup> A citizen's charter is a document that informs citizens about the service entitlements they have as users of a public service, the standards they can expect for a service (time frame and quality), remedies available for nonadherence to standards, and the procedures, costs and charges of a service. The citizen's charter aims to improve the quality of services by publishing standards that users can expect for each service they receive from the government. Sometimes, citizens' obligations or acts that are subject to fines are also listed. The charters entitle users to an explanation (and in some cases compensation) if the standards are not met. If citizens are well informed about their rights as clients of public services and about existing complaint mechanisms to voice grievances, they can exert considerable pressure on service providers to improve their performance.

and published a citizens' charter on various public services. The document listed the details of services in more than 40 departments in Telugu, English, Hindi, and Urdu.

The citizens' charter and the People's Watch movement, a citizens' group that organizes locally under the auspices of People's Power for collective, informed demand for better governance, forced the state government to commit to releasing citizens' charters in nine departments in 2001. The government undertook the preparation of the following citizens' charters in a systematic manner through consultations with stakeholders, training of staff and officials, and publicity and awareness raising among citizens:

- Andhra Pradesh Road Transport Corporation
- Andhra Pradesh State Electricity Board
- Transport Department
- Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Works and Sewerage Board
- Employment exchanges
- Commercial Taxes Department
- Stamps and Registration Department
- Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad
- Other municipalities

### ***Objectives***

The citizens' charter is the basis for citizens to be able to assert their rights locally, and the intent is for the government to publish such charters as a legal entitlement to citizens. The basic premise of People's Power was that the charters are a means to empower citizens with knowledge to enable them to wade through the thicket of regulations and procedures.

### ***Tools and Approaches***

People's Power focuses on increasing people's awareness of citizens' charters by providing them with information and encouraging them to expect and demand better services from the government. It also provides citizens with information about broader issues of good governance and public accountability tools, and provides basic training in successfully employing techniques of collective and informed participation. To this end, People's Power has provided training for citizens in various districts and towns in the state. As of May 2005, People's Power had conducted two-day training sessions in all 23 districts of the state of Andhra Pradesh, with 25 to 40 people being trained in each district. In this manner, a total of 79,089 people received training.

Citizens invited to the training events are typically active, public-spirited citizens committed to improving the lives of people in their communities. Representatives from reputable, local NGOs and CSOs also participate. The participants are encouraged to undertake participatory activities that showcase the use of accountability tools, such as citizens' charters, to improve public service delivery by various government entities. People's Power helps these groups so that their efforts can be replicated or scaled up. The activities in various districts begin on completion of training.

People's Power also plays an active role in propagating citizens' charters across the state. People's Power provides the advocacy and mobilizes people as its contribution to the overall campaign to educate citizens about the use of citizens' charters. Through its primary approach of advocacy,

People's Power has reached out to groups as diverse as grassroots communities, ordinary (disempowered) citizens, parliamentarians, political parties, and the media. The People's charter for public services was prepared in collaboration with the public, academics, former civil servants, government officials, and the media. The print media in particular have played a key role in disseminating advocacy articles and information about People's Power publications. People's Power pays particular attention to its media advocacy, conducting training and sensitization programs for journalists.

### ***Partners and Stakeholders***

People's Power's activities are aimed at grassroots communities, ordinary citizens, parliamentarians, political parties, and the media. People's Power's campaign mobilized citizens with the objective of exerting public pressure on the government to introduce citizens' charters in various government departments. Once charters have been introduced, People's Power trains and empowers citizens to ensure proper implementation of the charters by demanding better service from public agencies.

People's Power has about 100,000 active members across the state, but it estimates that some 10 to 15 percent of the state's population of 75 million recognize and support People's Power's campaigns. The members have formed nearly 3,000 primary units (at the village and municipal ward level), 520 intermediate units (at the subdistrict and municipal level), and district-level units in all 23 districts of Andhra Pradesh. Active members of People's Power democratically elect all office holders and executive-level functionaries. A group of elected delegates from across the state functions as the state-level apex body.

### ***Resources***

People's Power relies heavily on its pool of trained human resources, and to this end has trained more than 10,000 young people in the techniques of citizen assertion. This movement for accountability is a solution-oriented and inclusive approach strengthened by the involvement of various segments of society.

As the first phase of the activity was focused on advocacy, the only real cost involved was the printing of a booklet. A significant component of the second phase (training and advocacy) consists of voluntary efforts by People's Power members and supporters. It supplements this support through donations and from the sale of its publications. People's Power accepts donations from Indian citizens, particularly overseas Indians, and such donations are tax deductible. People's Power has cooperated extensively with the Center for Good Governance (CGG) in carrying out the citizens' charter initiative. The CGG has borne the expenses of organizing the training courses at each venue.

### ***Constraints and Problems***

People's Power has identified the following constraints to its campaigns as key challenges:

- The low levels of education and lack of access to information among the target group of citizens
- The low levels of collective action, resulting mainly from people's lack of awareness of their rights
- The low levels of accountability and transparency among civil servants that are compounded by excessive and opaque discretionary power often built on obsolete laws and rules, which results in pervasive corruption and an utter disregard for citizens' satisfaction, especially with regard to public service delivery
- A relatively high degree of centralization of government structures

- The few or no avenues for interaction between citizens and government officials
- The enduring legacy of the colonial and socialist past, resulting in government officials generally being viewed as dispensers of patronage and citizens as recipients of such patronage
- The lack, until recently, of specific accountability instruments, such as the right to information and citizen's charters.

### ***Outputs***

The systematic campaign spearheaded by People's Power resulted in the preparation of a comprehensive citizens' charter for municipalities in Andhra Pradesh. People's Power was involved in drafting and disseminating the municipal charter, which applies to more than 40 common public services and is being implemented by more than 100 municipalities in the state. The unique feature of this charter was that it provided for compensation of Rs 50 per day of delay in services, the first such instance in India. Experience has shown that the compensation clause, which stipulates that compensation has to be recovered from the salary of the employee at fault, has been properly implemented.

In addition, People's Power has worked with the government to formulate citizens' charters for village local government. Under the present three-tier system of local governance in India, the village local government is the lowest unit of local governance. The village charters also incorporate a compensation clause, whereby compensation of Rs 10 per day of delay is to be paid to the user of a service.

However, village local government charters have not proven to be as effective as the municipal charter. A number of reasons account for this, such as the fact that these charters do not cover all the services provided by village local governments. The primary reason, however, is people's low level of awareness about the charters' existence and their implications. Most Indians have become attuned to a system whereby they expect to pay bribes to access even the most basic services from a government department or functionary, and the concept of being compensated for inadequate service has yet to sink in. Another reason suggested by People's Power is that ordinary citizens might lack the confidence or the capacity to demand the compensation they are due.

As a result of media coverage of People's Power and the CGG's activities, the Andhra Pradesh government constituted a committee consisting of CSO representatives to review the implementation of charters in each department. Each month the committee conducts a poll to obtain feedback from citizens about services and their satisfaction with services.

The following lessons have been learned from the citizens' charter initiative:

- Informed, peaceful, and collective action by citizens is a powerful tool for improving accountability on the part of service providers.
- Citizens' charters and similar initiatives work well only when they are designed and implemented with an appropriate degree of citizen and employee involvement.
- Citizens' charters work well only when they include a meaningful mechanism for compensating citizens for poor service.

Citizens' charters are tools to help solve accountability problems pertaining to service delivery at the local level, but fundamental governance reforms are needed for more basic, systemic improvements in the overall social accountability framework.

### ***Institutionalization***

Citizens' charters are now an integral part of governance in Andhra Pradesh. The initiative led to the establishment of citizens' charters in 9 government departments by 2001, and today there are more than 700 charters in various government departments in Andhra Pradesh and across India. The citizens' charters have been institutionalized by means of the following approaches and activities:

- People's Power works on the premise of collective and informed demand by citizens. To this end it provides training to community-based organizations and collaborates with other CSOs and the media to facilitate greater citizen involvement. People's Power also conducts neighborhood-level training programs. The CGG's role focuses on training government officials and sensitizing them to these issues.
- People's Power makes a conscious effort to include various segments of the population in its training programs. After a training program, participants are expected to take the initiative forward in their respective fields of expertise with guidance from People's Power.
- People's Power undertakes the advocacy and mobilization part of the overall campaign, whereas the CGG provides technical, research, and documentation inputs. The CGG prepares the citizens' charters for departments, along with contact information for officials in the departments. By providing information and educating citizens on charters, People's Power and organizations such as the CGG act as catalysts and guide other organizations in the effective implementation of charters.

### ***Replication and Scaling Up***

There is potential for this initiative to be further scaled up. People's Power is planning to expand its activities by strengthening redress and compensation mechanisms in citizens' charters. The prerequisites for scaling up include the following:

- Persuading the government to draft and implement charters for all government departments
- Having greater citizen involvement during the charter preparation and implementation stages
- Creating awareness among citizens on their rights and responsibilities and the need to make use of the charters
- Factoring in supply constraints

*Sources:* Carter 2004; Centre for Good Governance 2004; Thampi and Paul 2000; Web site of People's Power (<http://www.loksatta.org>).

### **Monitoring by Public Watchdogs**

An increasingly vigilant civil society is critiquing, monitoring, and contesting the role of the state and its institutions in shaping and controlling the contours of governance.

### **SOCIAL AUDITS, COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND EPIDEMIOLOGICAL TECHNOLOGIES, PAKISTAN**

Even though Pakistan has had evidence-based monitoring initiatives since 1995, genuine opportunities for institutionalizing these approaches received a boost with the devolution of power to local governments that commenced in 2000. In an effort to improve both governance and democracy, the government of Pakistan, through its National Reconstruction Bureau, introduced a major initiative by launching a new local government system whereby authority and decision-making capacity were

devolved to lower levels of government and to communities. The new system replaced one that had been in place in more or less the same form since the 1800s. Elections of office holders at the new decentralized levels (union, subdistrict, and district) took place in 2001.

The reform is intended to improve access to public services; to encourage the sustainability of local development initiatives; and to augment the public sector's resources through community mobilization of resources, increased transparency, and reduced leakage of resources out of the system. The reform combines devolution of political power and functions, decentralization of administrative authority, redistribution of resources, and introduction of checks and balances. The new governance framework envisages the empowerment of citizens through officially recognized citizen community boards (CCBs) and enhanced representation by means of elections for the three tiers of local government. Members of the public set up CCBs to monitor service provision and government projects. In addition, CCBs must undertake their own projects with a 20 percent contribution from the public and 80 percent from the relevant local government.

To enhance the reliability of institutional data and to monitor the working of the new governance framework, the government has set up the National Reconstruction Information Management System. However, this new system has no scope or mandate to capture citizens' concerns and priorities effectively, because the formal system includes only those people who have access to services. People who do not use government health clinics, schools, or police stations are not part of the system, yet they are often the most disadvantaged members of society and those most in need of the services. This problem could only be addressed by a district-level survey process designed to include the most vulnerable groups. The skills to undertake such a process are currently not available at the district level, and stand-alone, externally managed monitoring mechanisms run the risk of encountering resistance or neglecting local sensitivities, resulting in a lack of ownership of the results. The stage was thus set for a community-driven and owned monitoring process. One such process was the social audit.

A social audit aims to make organizations more accountable for the social objectives they declare. Characterizing an audit as social does not mean that it does not examine costs and finances: its central concern is how resources are used to achieve social objectives, including how resources can be better mobilized to meet those objectives. Social audits involve more than just examining internal records, but include the experience of the people the organization or service is intended to serve. Organizations that engage in the social audit process convey the message that they are serious about accountability, equity, effectiveness, and value for money. In addition, social audits strengthen a community's voice, not only by allowing people to express their views through surveys, but through formal mechanisms of participation in interpreting evidence and developing solutions. The entire process builds capacities at national and local levels, both in community organizations and among service providers.

### ***Scope and Description of the Initiative***

The CIET is an international group of professionals from a variety of disciplines, including epidemiology, medicine, planning, communication, and the social sciences, who bring scientific research methods to communities. By involving local communities in information gathering and analysis, the CIET helps them participate in decisions that affect their lives. Through both formal and on-the-job training over a series of reiterative survey cycles, the CIET shares its collective skills and methods with national, regional, and local planners to help develop information systems for local stakeholders and build indigenous capacities for evidence-based planning and action. The evidence that the CIET helps gather is of a kind that shows where changes can be made and the likely impact of such changes.

In 2001, the UNDP in Pakistan, the UNDP Participatory Action Research to Advance Governance Options and Networks Regional Governance Program, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization provided funding for Community Monitoring of Public Services and Human Rights in Pakistan Project, a pilot social audit project in 10 districts covering more than 10,000 households. The funding was provided to the Devolution Trust for Community Empowerment, a NGO tasked by the government of Pakistan to empower local communities and build their capacity for better local governance according to Local Government Ordinance 2001. The trust contracted Community Information and Epidemiological Technologies (CIET) to monitor the effects of the governance devolution on the delivery of public services and on local governance.<sup>7</sup> The intent was to establish the feasibility of the process and a basis for extending more in-depth social audits to the whole country.

A 10-district pilot of the social audit was undertaken in 2001, and data collection for a full baseline survey of all the remaining districts was undertaken in 2002. In addition to the 2002 household interviews of 57,321 households, information was also collected from 751 school principals; 310 heads of government health facilities; and 757 union magistrates, deputy magistrates, and councilors. Some 14 percent of households in the survey were categorized as very vulnerable based on house construction, room occupancy, and occupation of the main breadwinner. About half the household respondents were women. The field teams constructed a basic community profile for each sample community. Preliminary findings from each district were discussed in focus groups divided by gender at the survey sites: a total of 374 male and 365 female focus groups.

In 2002, the Canadian International Development Agency provided funding for the Local Tools for Governance and Community Monitoring in Pakistan Project for CCBs, whereby the CIET extended the collection of baseline social audit data to all remaining districts in Pakistan. Detailed work to establish the social audit process at the district and subdistrict levels was undertaken in one focus district. The findings from the 10 pilot districts, combined with those from the remaining districts covered in 2002, provided a baseline for the national social audit 2004–09. The lessons learned about establishing the process at the district level in the focus district have been applied in extending the district social audit to all districts.

The most recent national social audit in 2005 surveyed 53,960 households (representing information on 424,841 people) in 430 representative communities. Key informant interviews were also carried out with district-level service providers, government and elected officials in 110 districts, and provincial-level key informants. Data collected included information about citizen participation; citizens' satisfaction with and perception of subnational government actors; and citizens' access to and satisfaction with basic municipal, police, and court services.

### ***Objectives***

The objectives of the CIET's social audits are as follows:

- Improve public services through evidence-based planning
- Build capacities at various levels (local community groups, local government) for collecting, analyzing, and using information to plan and implement priority improvements in key public services

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<sup>7</sup> The CIET was founded as the Tropical Disease Research Center in Mexico in 1985. In February 1994, when the CIET registered as a nonprofit NGO based in New York, it changed its name to Community Information and Epidemiological Technologies to reflect the broader application of epidemiological methods to research areas beyond the health field, but in South Africa and Europe, the CIET is known as Community Information, Empowerment, and Transparency. The Canadian branch of the CIET conducted the social audits in Pakistan.

- Improve governance through increased citizen participation in planning and monitoring services

### ***Tools and Approaches***

The concept of the social audit is simple: collect information about public services from the intended beneficiaries and from service providers, and use this as a basis for involving the public and service providers in making changes to improve the services. Following generation of the baseline, the social audit process has the following three distinct phases:

- *Design and data collection.* The strategic focus was clarified and the instruments were designed and pilot tested. Information was collected from households and key informants using a panel of people from representative communities. Households were asked about their use and perceptions of and experience with public services.
- *Evidence-based dialogue and analysis.* Data gathered from households was then linked with information gathered from public service providers. On this basis, an analysis was undertaken in a way that indicated which actions might improve matters. These findings were then taken back to the communities to elicit their ideas for improving the services. Finally, community representatives were brought face to face with service providers and planners to discuss the evidence and findings and to consider changes.
- *“Socialization.”* The evidence for public accountability is presented through workshops, a communications plan, evidence-based training of planners and service providers, training for members of the media, and partnerships with civil society.

The loop was closed by repeating the fact-finding exercise to assess changes and their effects.

An important feature of the CIET’s social audit methods is a baseline survey: a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collected from the same locations on the same issues. This kind of survey allows qualitative data to be used to give context to quantitative findings during the analysis. Therefore the following different instruments were designed and used for the social audit’s baseline survey:

- *Household questionnaire.* The main instrument for collecting quantitative data, this was divided into several sections. A general section covered house construction and demographics of the household members, including the education and occupation of the main breadwinner. A section on public services enquired about perceptions of, use of, and experience with water supply, health, education, police, and court services. In 2002, a section about overall satisfaction with a range of public services was added and the subsection about primary education revised for clarity. A section about local government examined intent to vote or voting in the union council elections (some communities were surveyed just before the 2001 elections, some just after) and expectations about the new councils. In 2002, the questions about voting were made more specific and questions about contacts with the new union councilors were added. A section on community participation asked about membership in voluntary groups and knowledge about CCBs. It then provided brief information about CCBs and asked about respondents’ willingness to participate as CCB members.
- *Community profile questionnaire.* This instrument collected information about features of the community that could be relevant to the use of and experience with public services, such as the types and locations of health and education facilities, the arrangements for disposal of garbage, and the availability of radio, newspapers, and community-based organizations. This instrument was completed in discussion with a community leader who was contacted when the field team entered the community to conduct the household survey. The community

profile instrument was refined for the 2002 survey to more adequately cover issues that could be linked to responses to the household questionnaire.

- *Key informant interview schedules with service providers.* These instruments were used to collect information from school principals and heads of health facilities about their facilities. In addition, some sections were completed based on observations the interviewers made in the facilities. The information included issues likely to be relevant to the level of use by and to the experience of service users. For schools, the information included class size; staff-pupil ratios; and the availability of facilities such as electricity and water supply, classroom furniture and equipment, toilets, and boundary walls. For health facilities the information included staffing levels, official fees, complaint systems, health education arrangements, and observations.
- *Key informant interview schedules with union councilors.* In communities surveyed before the 2001 union council elections, a community elder or a candidate standing for election to the union council was interviewed. In the districts surveyed after the 2001 elections and in all the remaining districts surveyed in 2002, members of the new union councils were interviewed. In 2002, an attempt was made to interview the union magistrate or union deputy magistrate in all the union councils covered by the survey (at least four per district), as well as another council member, preferably a female council member. The interview schedule, which was revised for the 2002 survey, included questions about priority problems in the union council, information needs of council members, members' methods of seeking the views of citizens, financial support issues, and knowledge about and views regarding CCBs and their formation among union council members.
- *Focus group guides.* The focus group guides are not questionnaires, but topic guides intended to ensure that discussions are focused and to share findings. The guides for the feedback focus groups were therefore developed once basic analysis of the household surveys had been undertaken. For the focus groups in each district, the relevant findings from that district were included in the guide. The focus group discussions in the main 2002 survey covered priority public service problems, potential for CCBs in the community, difficulties inherent in setting up CCBs and suggestions for how CCBs could work effectively, satisfaction with health services and how CCBs could monitor health services, whether the police made people feel safe, and how citizens could monitor the police.

### ***Partners and Stakeholders***

In 2001, Pakistan's new local government system allowed public participation in decision making. Following the devolution process, the government entrusted the Devolution Trust for Community Empowerment to empower local communities and ensure their participation in the development process by facilitating the formation of CCBs. Funded by multilateral and bilateral donors and tasked by the Devolution Trust for Community Empowerment and the National Reconstruction Bureau to be the main government counterpart at the federal level, the CIET developed social audits to benefit local governments and local communities. Thus the main stakeholders in social audits have been the central government, donor agencies, the CIET, CCBs, civil society, union councils, local governments, and communities.

### ***Resources***

The social audit projects for monitoring the impact of devolution on the delivery of public services have been funded by a number of donors, including the UNDP; the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development; the government of Norway; the U.K. Department for International Development; the Canadian International Development Agency; and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. In 2003, the audit projects received a significant boost from the Swiss

government, which contributed US\$1.3 million through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The Swiss funding covered 25 percent of the total cost of the five-year social audit program and was channeled through the UNDP. Whether the social audits at the national level will receive continuous funding once the donors end their program in 2009 is unclear.

### ***Constraints and Problems***

The data from surveys conducted by the CIET since 2001 represent powerful and pioneer information about citizens' perceptions of the delivery of public services in Pakistan. Despite the overall success and impact of the social audits, several weaknesses have not allowed for full utilization of the findings, namely the following:

- *Lack of communication.* Report dissemination, awareness raising, and information sharing with the main stakeholders, civil society groups, and government agencies were insufficient. The lack of outreach to a wider audience resulted in limited policy dialogue, data comparison, and analysis of findings between 2002 and 2005.
- *Lack of local ownership.* No local counterpart has yet been identified for continuing the social audits after the 2004–09 program ends. The reasons lie in the complex nature of the CIET technology and in the scarcity of workshops and training for local partners.
- *Lack of coordination with other data gathering exercises.* Even though other agencies are conducting a number of national surveys, collaboration between the research organizations in relation to the coordination and exchange of data is limited.

### ***Outputs***

Although it is too early to see extensive improvements in the delivery of public services that can be attributed to the results of social audits, local governments do seem to have changed how they approach development planning in terms of assessing priorities and matching them with individual requests, and the CIET has begun to document the correlations between improved governance and the impact of social audits. Nevertheless, the CIET has had several tangible outputs resulting from social audits as follows:

- *Establishing credible benchmarks.* The pilot district project revealed that only 23 percent of households were satisfied with the government's health services, 45 percent were dissatisfied with the available services, and 32 percent said they had no access to the government's public health services. Urban residents tended to be more satisfied than rural residents. The survey also asked where people obtained medical care: 31 percent reported going to public health facilities, 47 percent availed themselves of private services, 21 percent sought care from unqualified private practitioners, and 1 percent sought care from NGOs. The utilization pattern differed across Pakistan's three provinces.
- *Building local capacity.* To help build a solid base of skills in social audit methods and evidence-based planning, the CIET has begun to conduct a series of eight-week intensive courses in evidence-based planning for local government staff to enable them to use the social audits for planning purposes. The first such course in Asia was conducted in January 2005 and the second took place in September 2005.
- *Engaging the media.* Another important component of the CIET approach is the development of relationships with local and international media. By packaging the evidence to provide concise, newsworthy copy, major issues make for engaging reading and ensure ongoing coverage. Involving key stakeholders in the research also means that in many ways the "research is the message" and has the potential to change people's perceptions and actions.

### ***Institutionalization***

The pilot district project on devolution led to social audits every year for five years with the objective of tracking citizens' views of and experiences with public services and monitoring the improvement in public service delivery under devolution in all districts.

Following the first and second national social audits in 2002 and 2004–05, respectively, findings have been widely discussed with the public, civil society, service providers, planners, and policy makers. Social audits provide a means for citizens to have a say in district and subdistrict planning and support evidence-based planning at the district level. To help engage citizens in local planning and to support evidence-based planning, the CIET is implementing district social audits in five focus districts. The CIET helps district governments prepare development plans that incorporate the findings of the social audits, with a focus on health services and child nutrition. The social audit scheme in selected focus districts is part of the strategy for ensuring the sustainability of the social audit process whereby the five focus districts will serve as a test case for developing tools for implementing detailed social audits in other districts.

Data collection for the first social audit cycle in each focus district was completed in early 2005. Community focus groups to discuss key findings took place in June and July 2005. The first social audit report with a focus on preventive child health for the Khanewal district was published in February 2006 and revealed valuable findings, such as the low use of government health services and the high use of unqualified practitioners for treating diarrhea and acute respiratory infections, both of which are prevalent among children.

### ***Replication and Scaling Up***

A 10-district pilot in 2001 was expanded into the baseline social audit in 2002. This led to the five-year social audit of governance and the delivery of public services. During 2004–09, the national social audit will be repeated in alternate years to track progress under devolution and to inform policy.

*Sources:* CIET Pakistan and National Reconstruction Bureau 2003, 2005; CIET, December 18, 2003, press release ([http://www.ciet.org/www/image/press/press-media\\_101803\\_swisspak.html](http://www.ciet.org/www/image/press/press-media_101803_swisspak.html)); Web site of CIET Pakistan (<http://www.ciet.org/www/image/country/pakistan.html>); Web site of the National Reconstruction Bureau ([http://www.nrb.gov.pk/publications/LG\\_Final\\_Plan\\_2000.pdf](http://www.nrb.gov.pk/publications/LG_Final_Plan_2000.pdf)).

## **CITIZEN MONITORING OF INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS, ABRA, THE PHILIPPINES**

The need to monitor public works arose as a result of the systemic corruption in the Philippines, which is rooted in its history and manifest in its institutions. Despite changes of government over the years, corruption and a lack of accountability to the people has continued. The country ranked 102nd out of 145 countries in Transparency International's 2004 corruption perception index, indicating rampant corruption.

### ***Scope and Description of the Initiative***

Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Government (CCAGG) was founded in February 1986 with the objective of monitoring public spending and raising political awareness in local communities. The initial members of CCAGG came from an election watchdog group, the National Movement for Free Elections, whose members decided to reorganize themselves into CCAGG after observing the need to monitor public expenditures. The group rallied around the issue of roads in Abra, a neglected and isolated region. This was an emotional issue as much as a rational one, for without roads, the region's agricultural produce could not be taken to markets. The impetus for CCAGG's monitoring work came

from a news article that listed 20 completed public infrastructure projects in the region. CCAGG decided to verify the information, and in the process exposed discrepancies and anomalies in the government's reports. CCAGG's report eventually led to the suspension of 11 government engineers.

CCAGG focuses specifically on development projects and public expenditures in the Abra region with a view to enhancing public participation in development processes and bringing accountability tools, such as social auditing, closer to the people.

In 1987, the Philippine government implemented the Community Employment and Development Program under the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA). The program allotted small projects to communities and employed the projects' beneficiaries to augment their incomes. It also involved CSOs in monitoring project implementation. This relationship was formalized through a memorandum of agreement signed by NEDA, the Ministry of Budget and Management, and CCAGG. In 2000, CCAGG was one of two organizations chosen to participate in the first participatory audit project sponsored by the UNDP. The pilot involved monitoring the Community Employment and Development Program.

### ***Objectives***

The key objectives of CCAGG are as follows:

- Organize communities and create a sense of citizenship
- Establish permanent structures for regular and direct consultation with the public on their needs, problems, and interests
- Deal effectively with government agencies to ensure that the public's interests are on the political agenda
- Monitor government projects to ensure that funds meant for the projects are judiciously used and that projects' plans and specifications are followed
- Undertake projects aimed at improving people's socioeconomic and political conditions

### ***Tools and Approaches***

CCAGG conducted its first expenditure monitoring exercise in 1987. The project to come to its attention was the Community Employment and Development Program, President Corazon Aquino's investment plan for infrastructure aimed at boosting the economy. Following training sessions by NEDA on monitoring, CCAGG organized the project beneficiaries and transferred the monitoring technology to them. The underlying force behind the movement was active participation by the people. The monitoring unearthed anomalies such as "ghost" projects and incomplete works. The government acted on CCAGG's findings and conducted an investigation. The public works officials accused of corruption were found guilty and suspended from office for four to nine months without pay. The unqualified success of the activity ensured that the activity was repeated for subsequent projects.

In 2000, the UNDP and the Philippine Commission on Audit (COA) held the first-ever participatory audit of a local government in the Philippines using CCAGG as the NGO partner. Unlike regular audits that simply stressed compliance with rules and regulations, this audit added the concept of value for money, where community members assessed the actual benefits derived from the public expenditures. The intent was that NEDA and other oversight agencies would use the results of the participatory audit for planning purposes.

All CCAGG activities are participatory in nature. The infrastructure monitoring initiative is extremely inclusive, as monitoring teams are composed of the beneficiaries of the projects being investigated. As regards the participatory audit, the name of the initiative suggests the vital role of citizen participation. The social validation part of the audit provides a promising venue for community members from poor and marginalized families, many of them women, to participate. Their views and concerns about a project are solicited during informal community meetings or household interviews.

CCAGG also ensures sustained community participation by organizing people into village monitoring and evaluation teams. CCAGG provides regular training to these groups, and communication and interaction between them and CCAGG is ongoing to ensure sustained participation.

Monitoring infrastructure is CCAGG's "signature" activity. It uses the following procedures in conducting its infrastructure monitoring activities. It begins by formulating a monitoring work plan and then acquires the technical profile of the project it has decided to monitor from the government implementing agency or office. Once it has become familiar with the technical aspects of the project, it organizes the project beneficiaries and transfers the monitoring technology to them. The monitoring teams led by CCAGG members conduct a field visit to validate field conditions, that is, to check actual status against baseline parameters mandated by the project documents, namely, workmanship, quality, cost, and time. After completing the monitoring over a period of time, CCAGG compiles its findings and releases them at a conference at which recommendations are also discussed with the head of the implementing agency or office.

Thereafter, CCAGG collects comments and solutions for better management of the project—and of other projects—and incorporates these into a final report, drawing on its members' multidisciplinary academic, practical, and technical expertise. The final monitoring report is disseminated to the pertinent communities. CCAGG also uses the media for broad dissemination of its findings during its monitoring of government projects.

In the beginning, the activities of CCAGG spawned negative reactions from government agencies and some members of the private sector. One member was killed at the height of its monitoring activity. CCAGG members received anonymous threatening calls and faced a hostile reception during field visits. They were also offered bribes, but refused them. Despite such intimidation, CCAGG members continued with their work.

In relation to CCAGG's participatory audit work, CCAGG was selected as the CSO partner organization for the Enhancing the Public Accountability Program of the Philippine COA through Participatory Audits with CSOs Project, which was supported by the UNDP. The project piloted the involvement of CSOs in an attempt to address the increasing demand for transparency and accountability through greater citizen participation in auditing government services. The success of the project challenged the mind-set of government officials by demonstrating that citizen groups have the technical skills, could be unbiased, and could work in partnership with the government. However, the incoming chair of the COA was initially resistant to involving civil society in a function that required accounting expertise.

Participatory audits proceed as follows. CSOs are selected, trained, and deputed as members of an audit team. The audit team is formed on a per audit activity basis, meaning that it is dissolved after the specific audit activity has been completed. The overall terms and conditions covering the CSO audit activity are spelled out in a memorandum of agreement signed by the COA and the CSO.

The focus of the participatory audit is value for money, a systematic evaluation of the agency's objective and how this was achieved through programs, projects, and activities. During a participatory

audit, project beneficiaries evaluate the effectiveness of a project. The audit process documents project information and observations and recommends productive implementation of project activities. The participatory audit was pilot tested in 23 road projects in Abra province and the COA judged it as very successful.

### ***Partners and Stakeholders***

CCAGG primarily reaches out to the citizens of Abra province, the government, and the media and to other NGOs. Initially, however, the monitoring evoked suspicion and resentment among officials and field staff in Abra, who were unused to being questioned by lay people. Some contractors even tried to bribe CCAGG members. Slowly, as CCAGG's activities gained credibility, it developed allies within the government, especially at the national level.

CCAGG has been able to forge strong links with various government departments, including NEDA, the Department of Budget and Management, and the COA. In addition, as noted previously, CCAGG is one of two NGO partners for the UNDP's participatory audit program. Both the COA and the UNDP have acknowledged the role of CCAGG in conducting focused and efficient audits.

CCAGG also partners with the mass media for information dissemination purposes. The media are crucial in spreading the word about the results of CCAGG's investigations and in helping influence public opinion. CCAGG has gained national recognition in the Philippines and its reports attract national media attention.

*Echoes (Allangungan)* is CCAGG's weekly, primetime radio program that is broadcast every Sunday and rebroadcast on Wednesdays. The coverage area is wide, reaching four provinces. Once CCAGG receives the list of projects implemented in Abra, it goes on the air to disseminate details of the projects, such as the costs, the agencies implementing the projects, and the manner of implementation. The radio program has been one of CCAGG's most effective tools for information dissemination and advocacy.

### ***Resources***

CCAGG has five full-time monitoring staff, including engineers and accountants, but depends on voluntary contributions of time and labor. CCAGG deliberately avoided applying for grants or funds for a long time, as it did not want to compromise its independence. The UNDP recently stepped in to provide funding for its participatory monitoring program.

### ***Constraints and Problems***

The participatory audit tool has the following limitations:

- During the initial meetings before the conduct of the participatory audit, the COA stressed a need to uphold the confidentiality of reports and to avoid premature disclosure of audit results to parties who were not involved in the audit process. Although CCAGG resisted this strongly on the grounds of probity and transparency, it finally had to comply with the standard auditing procedures and processes followed by the COA.
- Participating NGOs such as CCAGG must provide counterpart expenses. These consist of the operational expenses of the office in undertaking the day-to-day activities of the audit engagement, such as electricity, telephone calls, and production of draft reports.
- Only the COA reviews and finalizes the findings of the NGO partner, which is CCAGG in this case.

- Capacity still needs to be improved for both the government (in relation to community organizing and the social aspect of monitoring) and CCAGG (in relation to auditing skills).

### **Outputs**

The following outputs resulted from the infrastructure monitoring:

- *Unearthing corruption.* The government audit teams investigated CCAGG's initial complaints and filed administrative cases against 11 public works engineers. Although politicians tried to step in and intervene on their behalf, other CSOs supported the cause while the cases were being prosecuted. Eventually, the accused were found guilty and suspended from office for a period ranging from four to nine months without pay.
- *Prosecuting inept officials.* Another example concerns the Sinalang Detour Bridge. The bridge was completed in 1996 at a cost of ₱8.26 million. It was hastily built and in the end was never used because of errors in the engineering design. To add fuel to the controversy, a flash flood destroyed the bridge in 1997, unleashing a public outcry. CCAGG pushed for government agencies to investigate the matter, and NEDA, the Department of Public Works and Highways, and the COA sent in teams. CCAGG was not satisfied with the response of the Department of Public Works and Highways, following which the COA recommended the prosecution of certain Department of Public Works and Highways personnel.
- *Improving infrastructure.* A visible impact of CCAGG's work is greater accessibility to remote areas as a result of roads, bridges, and so on. Children are now able to go home every day after school instead of once a week.
- *Saving scarce government resources.* CCAGG's vigilance has saved scarce government resources from graft and corruption. Early detection of technical flaws in projects has resulted in collaborative correction of the projects, thereby saving millions of pesos. One example is the project for laying gravel on the Abra–Kalinga Road, where CCAGG identified the gravel as coming from a location close to the project site and not 51 kilometers away as required in the plans. The savings amounted to millions of pesos. CCAGG reported the matter, and an investigation by the government corroborated its findings. The contractor was ordered to use local gravel, thereby saving scarce government resources. CCAGG has also "rescued" a number of projects with faulty designs, such as the irrigation system in the municipality of Tubo. In addition, CCAGG closely monitors tenders for bids, leaving little scope for tampering. "Ghost" projects no longer exist in Abra province.
- *Reducing graft and corruption.* CCAGG's monitoring activities have checked the systemic corruption in the region. Government officials have become quite cautious in case they end up being "CCAGGed," a new slang term for having one's misdeeds exposed.
- *Changing the attitude of government officials.* Attitudes among local officials in relation to CCAGG have shifted from strong resistance to cooperation, and these officials now use CCAGG's assessment reports as one of the bases for the release of government funds. That is, CCAGG's work has become part of the system.

In general, the project succeeded in creating a more transparent, accountable, and participatory environment. Furthermore, the agencies being audited were more comfortable in the knowledge that members of the audit team were residents of the area. Accountability was highlighted, because area residents monitored the results. The sense of community was heightened, as the project brought citizens together to work for a common goal. Lastly, the exercise built up citizen empowerment, as residents could use their new knowledge as a weapon against corruption.

### ***Institutionalization***

Institutionalization has been manifested in the creation of links with the government and with NGO networks. As concerns the former, CCAGG's relationship with the government has undergone a marked change: the initial resentment and threat perception gave way to grudging, and then open, support. CCAGG even began to receive insider information from well-wishers in the government.

CCAGG's monitoring work has always been aided by other government agencies, such as NEDA and the Department of Budget and Management, in terms of data and training. The government has duly recognized CCAGG's role in bringing about greater accountability and transparency in public works. President Aquino gave CCAGG a presidential citation for outstanding community service.

CCAGG's activities have been firmly embedded in the structure of the state. As mentioned earlier, it became a partner NGO of the UNDP and the COA for the first participatory audit of a local government in the country. After its first audit, the Ministry of Public Works and Highways in Ilocos, one of 17 regions in the Philippines, made CCAGG monitoring reports a requirement before projects were paid for. Members of CCAGG were also appointed as observers in the Prebid and Awards Committee, in which they participated as volunteers. Partnerships with CSOs are one of the prioritized reform measures identified in the COA's framework and strategy for reform.

CCAGG has realized the importance of creating and fostering networks and is already part of several NGO networks, such as the Transparency and Accountability Network. In 2003, the Northern Luzon Coalition for Good Governance, a network of mainly parish-based social action groups, was established. CCAGG is at the helm of this alliance, which encompasses a much wider geographical area than just Abra and northern Luzon. CCAGG has realized the importance of being part of national transparency networks, as directly lobbying the central government is extremely time-consuming.

The COA published a book on participatory audits to help institutionalize them.

### ***Replication and Scaling Up***

Citizen monitoring of infrastructure projects has been replicated in a number of provinces, in some cases with assistance and inputs from CCAGG. The participatory audit process was successfully replicated in Mountain province, Samar, and Camarines Norte. CCAGG's participation in the audit process contributed to sound fiscal management and good governance. To build capacity among NGOs interested in conducting this activity, CCAGG members act as resource persons, providing training on the theory and practical aspects of monitoring. They also teach the NGOs how to write reports, make presentations, and so on. CCAGG is currently developing a monitoring manual to give lay people the knowledge to undertake project monitoring. CCAGG now has a presence in 15 of the 79 provinces in the Philippines.

*Sources:* Batalla 2000; Philippine Commission on Audit and UNDP 2002; Transparency International 2005.

## **TEXTBOOK COUNT PROGRAM, THE PHILIPPINES**

The Textbook Count Program was an effort to check widespread corruption in textbook procurement in the Philippines. The shortage of textbooks in many public schools had reached an alarming ratio of one textbook for every five students.

With the objective of achieving a ratio of one textbook per subject for each student, the Education Department undertook two projects: the Second Social Expenditure Management Project and the Third Elementary Education Procurement Project. These 2003 World Bank-supported projects aimed

to deliver 37 million textbooks directly to elementary and secondary school students in all public schools in the country at a total procurement cost of ₱1.3 billion (US\$23 million). However, the specter of rampant corruption compelled the Department of Education to seek civil society participation by approaching the Government Watch project of the Ateneo School of Government to organize and coordinate the CSO's monitoring activities and ensure corruption-free textbook delivery. Opinion surveys conducted before the launch of the program revealed that the Department of Education was considered to be one of the most corrupt government departments.

### ***Scope and Description of the Initiative***

In 2003, the Department of Education was to deliver textbooks and teachers' manuals for all 10 years of elementary and secondary education to 5,500 delivery points nationwide. To address previous delivery problems, the Department of Education initiated the Textbook Count Program: National Monitoring of Textbook Delivery. The department needed involvement of the CSO monitors in three main phases of the program: the bidding process, book production (quantity and quality), and book delivery to high schools and districts.

Government Watch served as the national coordinator of the CSOs. The former was a logical choice, because it had been set up in 2000 as a corruption prevention project to track public expenditures and monitor the implementation of government programs. Government Watch addressed the Textbook Count Program's initial limitations of monitoring only as far as zone and division levels by extending the monitoring to the district level. Government Watch monitored the onward delivery of 263,771 textbooks from 15 districts to 155 elementary schools in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

As the textbook count project was nationwide, Government Watch faced a scarcity of resources (human, financial, and technical) to actually perform the count across the country and asked for help from other CSOs. Given the extensive experience of the National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) with election monitoring and its dispersion of volunteers across the country, it fit the needs of the count.

NAMFREL is a nonpartisan, nationwide organization of individuals and civic, religious, professional, business, labor, educational, youth, and nongovernmental groups that work for free and honest elections in the Philippines, but the network also involves itself in other activities during nonelection years. Currently NAMFREL has more than 250,000 individual members and more than 1,500 volunteers in various provinces.

Later on, the Boy Scouts and Girls Scouts of the Philippines took the lead in mobilizing volunteers for textbook counts. The involvement of young people and children was a significant asset to the initiative, given their presence in every school.

During the first textbook count in 2003 and two consecutive counts in 2004 and 2005, 52 million textbooks worth ₱2 billion (US\$40 million) going to 4,844–7,499 delivery points were tracked.

### ***Objectives***

The objectives of the initiative are to fight corruption, solve previous problems with textbooks delivery, and eliminate alleged irregularities in textbooks quality and quantity by engaging parent-teacher associations and NGOs in monitoring the bidding process, undertaking quality control, overseeing deliveries, and helping districts distribute the textbooks to schools.

### ***Tools and Approaches***

The Textbook Count Program brought together several CSOs, including NGOs, whose role was to help the Department of Education monitor the timely delivery of the correct number of textbooks to districts and high schools. The program supervised the suppliers' delivery schedules at the zone, division, high school, and district levels and introduced a mechanism for on-the-spot monitoring and inspection of textbooks at all delivery locations. The program involved CSOs with nationwide networks to ensure coverage, and NAMFREL, which had chapters nationwide, took the lead in mobilizing volunteers.

A press conference was held to formally launch the Textbook Count Program. NAMFREL and the other NGOs advertised the initiative in the main newspapers and on the radio. The consortium printed posters containing information on the delivery schedules for each region and division.

CSO participation in the predelivery phase included observing the bidding process and the negotiations between winning suppliers and the Department of Education. With the objective of injecting transparency into the entire process, the program printed the complete list of schools and districts that would receive new books and the corresponding number of copies they would receive in leading daily newspapers. Groups monitored the terms of and schedules for delivery and inspected the printing, binding, and packaging of textbooks in warehouses.

The delivery phase involved monitoring deliveries on site and documenting the delivery process. CSOs observed whether deadlines were being met, the condition of the delivered goods, and the accuracy of the book counts. They also asked citizens residing in localities near schools to monitor whether schools received the intended number of copies.

The postdelivery phase included a postevaluation workshop organized by the Philippine Governance Forum with support from the Asia Foundation. Stakeholders such as the Department of Education and suppliers participated in the workshop. The workshop included presentations by the stakeholders, followed by discussions on the key issues that had arisen during the first round of the program. The discussion examined such concerns as storage, damage to textbooks, sufficiency of supply, and relevance of textbook content. Participants were also asked to formulate recommendations for improving the process.

Two innovations that were part of the third textbook count stood out as unique contributions to the anticorruption effort, particularly in relation to transparency. The first innovation was making children and young people important and effective contributors to the initiative. The second innovation was using the logistical strength of the private sector to address the textbook distribution problem by using the Coca-Cola truck distributors' network and an education advocacy group to reach schools located in far-off villages.

### ***Partners and Stakeholders***

Since the launching of the Textbook Count Program in 2003, the number of partners and stakeholders has grown each year. The main stakeholders remain the Department of Education, Government Watch as the national coordinator, parent-teacher associations, pupils, and CSOs. In the third Textbook Count, the CSOs' participation was formalized with the signing of a commitment of support and cooperation letter between the Department of Education and the consortium of CSOs. In addition, the Education Department signed separate memorandums of agreement with Coca-Cola Bottlers Philippines, Inc. and the Community Development Initiative for the distribution of textbooks in remote areas. The 2005 textbook count was undertaken in partnership with volunteers from the

Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of the Philippines; Coca Cola Bottlers; the Community Development Initiative; and numerous members of the consortium of NGOs, including NAMFREL.

### ***Resources***

When the Department of Education decided to fight against rising corruption and improve textbook distribution, it not only lacked the personnel to effectively monitor all deliveries, but also sufficient funding for monitoring activities. The extent of nationwide distribution required the help of a consortium of CSOs that were able and willing to volunteer their participation. The Asia Foundation provided funds for coordinating the work, conducting briefings, processing documents, evaluating the first two rounds of the Textbook Count Program, and undertaking an institutionalization study. The Partnership for Transparency supported the coordination work and the evaluation.

Government Watch raised two important questions on completion of the third round of the Textbook Count Program. The first question was whether civil society could continuously bear the cost of participating in the program. The second was how long citizens would be willing to volunteer to help maintain government transparency and accountability. These questions remain open.

### ***Constraints and Problems***

The postevaluation workshop helped identify numerous problems and challenges, namely:

- Relationships between the CSO monitors and Department of Education officials were strained. The latter tended to be defensive when asked about defects in books; for example, about 100,000 textbooks were found to have weak bindings and the publisher had to repair them.
- Printing delays occurred because of a lack of paper.
- Difficulties encountered during the delivery phase included inspections not being thorough and meticulous; for example, in some cases, the delivery and acceptance receipts were signed without counting the books or checking their quality, or the suppliers took the lead in the counting and quality inspection.
- Certain suppliers failed to meet their deadlines or to observe their delivery schedules. They also seemed to lack a sense of responsibility in that they did not handle the books with care, as a result of which many books were damaged. A number of delivery service providers refused to deliver books to schools that were not easily accessible.
- In the postdelivery phase, the main problem was a lack of adequate and secure storage areas at the district level, which again resulted in books being damaged.
- District offices of the Department of Education did not follow a policy of uniform textbook distribution for their schools, despite a rule that states that the bigger a school's enrollment, the larger the share of textbooks it is to receive.
- Monitors noted gaps in the quality of books, as certain schools felt that textbook content did not fit their needs.
- Some schools could not cope with the policy encouraging multiple titles to promote competition in textbook production. The policy assumed that teachers had the necessary skills to handle multiple titles. Many teachers, already burdened with huge classes found that multiple titles made teaching more complicated and learning more difficult. They opted to stick to one title, leaving the other books unused.

### ***Outputs***

Although the content of textbooks did not meet the requirements of all students, the student-textbook ratio did improve. For the first time, by November 2003, the entire procurement of 37 million textbooks was carried out in 12 months, compared with 24 months as in the past. In addition, the average price per book fell from ₱90 pesos to ₱41 pesos because of more transparent procurement procedures, resulting in government savings of ₱68.5 million (US\$1.4 million), which had previously been lost due to corruption-based inefficiencies. The quality of textbook printing and binding has improved. Delivery errors decreased to as low as 5 percent on average.

Public opinion about the level of corruption in the Department of Education shifted perceptibly. A 2002 survey by the Social Weather Stations indicated that respondents believed that the Department of Education was one of the five most corrupt government agencies. However, another survey carried out in 2003 found that people now viewed the Department of Education as one of the five agencies doing the most to address corruption.

### ***Institutionalization***

The recommendations of the postevaluation workshop, including developing user-friendly information about the program, creating grievance mechanisms, and conducting training programs and stakeholder meetings, were given top priority when the Department of Education planned the second Textbook Count Project. For example, in response to the Government Watch report, the Department of Education issued a directive on proper use of the textbook distribution fund.

The second textbook count, which took place from November 2003 to November 2004, was a continuing project of the Department of Education. With the monitoring support of CSOs, the program supervised the delivery of 14 million textbooks and teachers' manuals to 2,158 districts and 5,498 high schools across the country. The 18 members of the CSO consortium included a wide range of local, national, and international organizations. The responsibilities of the CSOs included drafting a code of conduct for warehouse inspectors, sending representatives for warehouse inspections, and submitting reports on the outputs of the inspections. The Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts of the Philippines served as provincial coordinators of the monitoring project.

The third textbook count took place from April 2005 to June 2006, under which 1.3 million textbooks were delivered to 42,000 public schools. By this time, the consortium of CSOs had 34 members. The network was strengthened by help from the private sector. Government Watch and the Department of Education planned to launch the fourth textbook count in November 2006. Government Watch is also planning an additional component tentatively called the Textbook Walk to take place in January 2007. This component will include simultaneous events nationwide at which local officials from the Department of Education and community volunteers will gather to walk and bring books to elementary schools. Participation by the Coca-Cola Company is anticipated. The aim of the textbook walk is to address district offices' failure to deliver to elementary schools, especially those in remote villages.

According to Government Watch, the biggest and most difficult challenge is the program's institutionalization. The element proposed for institutionalization is the management of the various volunteer groups that monitor bidding and textbook quality and delivery. To pursue institutionalization, Government Watch organized focus group discussions with pertinent officials from the Department of Education and CSOs. The focus groups included their recommendations in a memorandum entitled "Institutionalizing NGO and Private Sector Participation in the Department's Procurement Process" and proposed it to the Department of Education. The memorandum expands the coverage of CSO participation to all other department procurement, such as school buildings,

furniture, and nutrition program items. Feedback from the department's management has been positive and the department is expected to sign the memorandum soon.

### ***Replication and Scaling Up***

The design and implementation of the Textbook Count Program was successful in that it was not designed to solve all the problems of the Department of Education, but to test a template for civil society monitoring of projects. It had a visible impact on reducing textbook-related corruption, proving that with simple templates and simple objectives, citizens can monitor government performance and influence government policies and programs. The monitoring template is currently being used by other CSOs engaged in a national monitoring initiative known as the Coalition against Corruption.

The Textbook Count Program has shown that the following ingredients are key to the success of monitoring projects in the Philippines: (a) the development of simple templates; (b) the desire on the part of CSOs to work with government agencies in the design of templates; and (c) a nonjudgmental approach by CSOs in making their findings known. This approach has yielded positive responses among government agencies, especially when reformists within the government are identified and their cooperation is ensured. The program's ability to develop relationships with government agencies responsible for prosecuting cases of corruption gave the project the clout and the influence to do what it needed to do and to let the appropriate agency follow through on its findings.

*Sources:* Government Watch 2005, 2006; Ramos 2003; *Visayan Daily Star* 2004; Tolentino 2004; Web site of the Department of Education of the Republic of the Philippines (<http://www.deped.gov.ph/posts.asp?dp=58>); Web site of NAMFREL (<http://namfrel.zamboanga.ph/index.php>); Web site of the Partnership for Transparency Fund (<http://www.partnershipfortransparency.info/index.html>); Web site of Procurement Watch (<http://www.procurementwatch.org.ph/index.htm>); Web site of the Transparency and Accountability Network (<http://www.tan.org.ph/files/home.asp>); Web site of Transparent Accountable Governance (<http://www.tag.org.ph/cac/textbook.htm>).

### **NATIONAL CITIZEN OMBUDSMEN LIAISON COUNCIL, JAPAN**

Japan's local governments have long been plagued by widespread corruption, including bribery of senior public officials, misuse of public funds, and massive expenditures on white elephant public works projects whose primary purpose is to benefit large construction companies and politicians rather than the public. The National Citizen Ombudsmen Liaison Council (NCOLC) is a network of (at this writing) 84 separate citizen organizations located across Japan that have joined forces in a coordinated effort to fight this corruption by seeking greater transparency in government, especially in relation to the expenditure of public funds.

### ***Scope and Description of the Initiative***

The NCOLC was created in a spontaneous response to the disclosure of one of the biggest investigations into government corruption in Japan's modern history. When a handful of public interest lawyers appeared at Sendai City Hall in June 1993 to request information about spending on entertainment by Mayor Toru Ishii, they were startled to discover that Ishii had been arrested on the very day they had first filed their request for information. (Sendai is a city of more than 1 million people in northern Japan.) Before Ishii's arrest, many rumors of corruption had attracted the lawyers' interest. The final outcome was that the mayor was charged and convicted of collecting huge bribes from Japan's major general contractors in connection with bid rigging for public works projects in the Sendai area.

Mayor Ishii was not alone. Prosecutors would soon arrest and convict the governors of two prefectures (equivalent to provinces or states), and the chairs, presidents, and other officers of several major general contracting companies. These cases show that the process for procuring works funded by taxes is thoroughly corrupt. Japan's giant construction companies have long been accustomed to bribing officials to obtain confidential budget information concerning public works projects and then subverting the bidding process by secretly agreeing on inflated bids in advance and deciding the winner of each bid themselves.

The arrest of the mayor and his cohorts inspired the Sendai lawyers to continue their search for incriminating documents, and they commenced a practice of filing a request for information about officials' entertainment expenses every month. This led to startling results: they would identify reports of millions of dollars in questionable entertainment expenses. The regular scrutiny by these volunteer lawyers and the after-effects of the Ishii scandal had an immediate impact, in that the entertainment expenses suddenly dropped off.

Flush with the initial success of their venture, the Sendai lawyers contacted other lawyers across the country and explained how their group had dug into officials' expense accounts. Attorneys in Osaka, Nagoya, and elsewhere shared their concerns and participated in the first national meeting of so-called citizen ombudsmen in July 1994. This led to the formation of the NCOLC. Since 1994, the NCOLC has continually applied Japan's freedom of information laws and other tools in its efforts to eliminate corruption in government.

### ***Objectives***

To formalize the creation of its national network and to make a clear declaration of its objectives and modes of operation, the NCOLC adopted a charter. Article 2 of this charter states that its purpose is "to conduct surveillance of improper and unfair acts concerning national and local public bodies, and to exchange information and experiences among citizen ombudsmen and conduct joint research and other activities with the objective of correcting such improper and unfair activities" (translated by Repeta 1999).

"Improper and unfair activities" refers to wasting public resources and to corruption. Since the initial investigation into excessive use of public funds for entertainment, the ombudsmen have expanded their range of targets to include activities such as the following:

- Bid rigging in public works projects
- Reimbursement for fraudulent expense requests
- Moribund official "audit" committees made up of retired government officials and their cronies
- Contracts for public services issued to private companies
- Secret and unaccountable police funds (intended to pay informers and to be used for other official purposes)

### ***Tools and Approaches***

The citizen ombudsmen who attended the first national gathering at Nagoya in 1994 and who continue their work today are not government officials. They have no official authority, and therefore cannot order that information be disclosed or threaten to arrest individuals they think are breaking the law. Nevertheless they do have some important tools and approaches at their disposal, including the following:

- *Freedom of information rules.* The most important tool is the law pertaining to freedom of information. Japan's local governments began adopting freedom of information rules in the mid-1980s and all major local governments had such rules in place by the time the NCOLC network was founded in 1994. This is an especially flexible and practical tool that enables the NCOLC and others to request the release of any information in the government's possession.
- *Annual coordinated filing.* Japan is divided into 47 separate administrative districts (prefectures). Japanese law empowers each prefecture to adopt local regulations to govern government operations and other matters. Not long after the Sendai ombudsmen invited their colleagues to the first national meeting in 1994, they hit on the idea of using the new network to file identical requests for information at all prefecture offices on the same day to note any differences among the government responses and to exploit such differences to push for reform. The first such coordinated filing took place on April 25, 1995. Since then, the NCOLC has filed identical requests for information once a year on the same day at all major local governments, including prefecture and city governments.
- *Annual transparency ranking.* As the result of its coordinated requests, the NCOLC had begun to collect a unique set of internal documents gathered from local governments nationwide. Next it faced the question of what to do with this information. Most important, how could it both draw attention to corrupt local governments and recognize those governments that had adopted measures to eliminate corruption. Before long, the NCOLC hit on the simple, but powerful, idea of publishing its own national transparency ranking, whereby a handful of citizens would appoint themselves to pass judgment on the practices of elected representatives. The NCOLC spent much of 1996 designing a methodology for deciding on a meaningful ranking and the best way to disseminate it as widely as possible. The system it devised is based on each local government's response to information requests filed that year, with points allocated based primarily on the scope of the information disclosed. Each year the NCOLC appoints a committee to review the documents obtained and, based on a list of openness factors, to determine a score for each local government. For example, the openness factors used in the 10th annual ranking published in 2006 included the following:
  - Entertainment expenses for the chief executive
  - Records concerning the selection of so-called designated contractors
  - Investigative reports on the results of bidding for design contracts
  - Fees paid for "policy research"
  - Funds for police informers
  - Minutes of the meetings of the public safety committees, which are charged with police oversight

The NCOLC also assesses the availability of certain information (on entertainment expenses and designated contractors) through the Internet.

- *Public advocacy.* Each year, the news media across the country report the annual transparency rankings of local governments. If the ranking of a particular prefecture government rises or falls, this is big news to that government and to the voters who elected its chief executive. Because voters could be expected to respond warmly to high rankings, local politicians pay close attention. Undoubtedly some take measures calculated to improve their rankings. Wide publicity regarding the NCOLC's activities has been an important catalyst of recent reforms in local politics.

- *Citizen suits.* In addition to the information disclosure system, Japanese law provides other tools to enforce accountability in government. One the NCOLC often uses is the citizen suit. This empowers ordinary citizens to petition the government to seek compensation for injury caused by corrupt officials, and in cases where the government does not act, citizens can file suits on behalf of the government themselves. For the NCOLC, this has been an especially important tool in the area of price fixing in public works projects. Because such price fixing can be a criminal violation of Japan's antitrust laws, the NCOLC can follow up on cases where national prosecutors or the national Fair Trade Commission take regulatory action or pursue criminal prosecutions. In a recent highly publicized case involving bid fixing in relation to bridge construction, for example, the NCOLC filed 11 separate suits seeking the recovery of public funds and won 5.

### ***Partners and Stakeholders***

Because the NCOLC is a national network, it has succeeded in coordinating participation by many small organizations, each representing a different group of citizen stakeholders, into a single national movement. Therefore the core partners and stakeholders are lawyers and other public-spirited citizens. The NCOLC has also spawned a sister organization, a nonprofit entity known as the Citizens Center for Information Disclosure. The mission of the Citizens Center is to support information requesters from across the country in using Japan's freedom of information laws, especially to obtain information from national government agencies.

In addition to the 84 constituent groups, their members, and citizens themselves, the most powerful partners have been the news media. The news media are not only capable of alerting citizens to the results of the NCOLC's investigations, but because politicians fear a public backlash from revelations of wrongdoing, they tend to avoid actions that will result in negative portrayals in the press.

The Constitution of Japan requires chief executives of local governments to be elected by popular vote. If the national government appointed mayors and prefecture governors, the work of the NCOLC would have little effect, but election of these officials has provided the opportunity for reform-oriented politicians to become key partners in the ombudsmen movement. The NCOLC highlighted the issue of corruption, and thus helped create the opportunity for a new breed of politician to arise. These reform-minded politicians have shown that a commitment to clean and open government and to reductions in spending on giant public works projects can bring in votes and win elections.

The unquestioned leader in this regard is Jiro Asano, who served as governor of Miyagi Prefecture (which encompasses the city of Sendai) from 1993 through 2001. Asano resigned his position in the national government to run for governor when his predecessor resigned and was prosecuted for his involvement in bid rigging. From the governor's office, Asano encouraged the ombudsmen, ordering his subordinates to disclose all the information they requested. In September 1996, Asano became the first governor to prohibit all use of public funds for entertainment by public officials. When the Sendai District Court issued a historic decision ordering the prefecture to disclose the names of all those entertained with public money, Asano overrode the objections of prefecture officials and instructed that the court order be enforced. Other reform-minded governors followed his lead, creating national momentum for reform.

### ***Resources***

Although no complete roster of the members of all the organizations that constitute the NCOLC is available, 350 to 450 people attend each annual NCOLC meeting. The NCOLC relies on dues paid by members and financial contributions from individuals to fund its operations. It does not accept any

financial support from the government or from businesses. (It may make an exception to this rule only for funding to support the annual meetings.)

The NCOLC maintains an office in Nagoya, and as noted earlier, also maintains an alliance with the Citizens Center for Information Disclosure in Tokyo. However, the NCOLC's primary resource is the willingness of lawyers and other citizens to volunteer their time to work to achieve the NCOLC's ideals.

### ***Constraints and Problems***

The most fundamental constraint is the small number of lawyers relative to Japan's population. As of late 2006, Japan had approximately 22,000 people licensed as private lawyers for a population of approximately 120 million. The small number of lawyers means that the average person has limited access to the legal system and that the supply of public interest lawyers who can join initiatives such as the NCOLC is also limited. The national government has responded to continued calls to expand the number of lawyers with a judicial reform program that is expected to increase the number of lawyers to at least 50,000 by 2010. Meanwhile, the NCOLC remains severely shorthanded.

A second fundamental restraint is the limited availability of funding to support public interest initiatives. Given Japan's high taxes on wealth transfers and other factors, philanthropy is poorly developed. Groups such as the NCOLC have a hard time raising significant funding to support their work. As one simple illustration, the NCOLC's office is not an independent office, but is located in the offices of an attorney who is a leading member of the organization.

Another continuing obstacle is the entrenched position of most local governments, and especially of the national government. Like other governments around the world, they are opposed to transparency measures for fear they will dilute their authority and may result in revelations of illegal or embarrassing practices. Thus the NCOLC must accept as a fact of life that governments will typically oppose their work and the reforms they espouse.

### ***Outputs***

Despite the constraints, in the space of a few years, the NCOLC has achieved dramatic results.

***Decline in Entertainment Spending and Other Wasteful Spending.*** The simple requests for information initiated by the Sendai lawyers in 1993 and 1994 had a powerful effect on reducing wasteful entertainment spending, not only in Sendai, but throughout the country. Their launch of coordinated requests for information nationwide allowed them to gather enough information to start compiling a national database of information disclosed from government files.

One response to a request for information revealed that local government officials had spent large sums of money to entertain national government officials with the goal of entering into their good graces and obtaining approvals for lavish public works spending in their home districts. Further investigation revealed that all prefecture governments had adopted this practice. As one ombudsman from Tokyo commented, "All local governments around Japan operate under the same national laws and with the same administrative structure... corruption in government was not just a special product of one local government. There may be differences of degree, but such corruption can occur anywhere in Japan, and without a doubt, is taking place."

Until the ombudsmen's requests, Japanese voters had been completely ignorant of their local officials' use of public funds for excessive entertainment expenses. Suddenly this was a big story. News agencies around the country competed to get the latest details on the ombudsmen's discoveries.

Every time another instance of expensive imported wines and lavish parties at Ginza nightclubs was revealed, another news story was born. The tale of government officials wining and dining themselves at taxpayers' expense seized the national imagination, and editorials condemning the practice quickly appeared.

Reported estimates of total spending for officials' entertainment of other officials quickly rose to hundreds of millions of dollars per year. In reaction, the more progressive governors followed the lead of Governor Asano of Miyagi and ostentatiously declared a ban on such spending.

***New Breed of Reform Politicians.*** The revelations initiated by the NCOLC led to the removal of politicians from office. Several such politicians have been replaced by a new breed of local reform-minded politicians committed to cost cutting and citizens' interests, many of them unaffiliated with previous practices and often unaffiliated with any political party. The most well known of this new breed of politicians is Yasuo Tanaka, a novelist who was elected governor of Nagano prefecture in 2000, succeeding a man who had held that office for 20 years. Tanaka not only made a "no new dams" pledge and other declarations against wasteful public spending, once he took office he moved the governor's office to the first floor of the prefecture building to a suite with glass walls so that any passer-by could observe the governor at work.

The trend continues. In September 2006, a female college professor was elected governor of Shiga prefecture based on her pledge to reduce government waste. In particular, she adopted the unheard-of position of opposing the construction of a new station in her prefecture for Japan's high-speed bullet train. Other bullet train stations are located in neighboring prefectures not far away, and studies indicated that the cost of construction would far exceed any expected benefits to the public.

***New Efforts to Stop Bid Rigging in Public Works.*** Partly as a result of the NCOLC's investigations of bid rigging and citizen suits filed to recover funds lost because of inflated prices, a new consensus regarding the lack of propriety of bid rigging developed in Japan. In addition to a series of court judgments ordering construction companies to pay compensation, the NCOLC's efforts have played a role in demands for legislative reform. In 2004, the Antimonopoly Law was revised with a specific focus on bid rigging. The law not only increased financial penalties for companies that engaged in bid rigging, it also established an entirely new system providing for sharply reduced penalties for companies that voluntarily came forward to disclose bid rigging to the authorities. In response to legislative changes and public demand for changes, the chief executives of many construction companies, including the five giant contractors that dominate the industry, have issued public pledges that their firms will not participate in bid rigging.

### ***Institutionalization***

The NCOLC uses its annual meetings and its management structure to ensure that the NCOLC's participating groups and members are satisfied that they are fully involved in moving the organization forward.

Since the first meeting attended by 130 members in Sendai in July 1994, the NCOLC has made its annual meeting the key focus of each year's activities. The meeting is always held at the same time each year and the venue is changed each year, enabling different constituent groups to serve as hosts and enjoy ease of access to the meeting site.

The annual meeting also enables members to directly discuss issues of interest, both at general sessions and among individuals and subgroups. The NCOLC typically announces one or more formal resolutions to put the network on record for or against a topical issue. Such formal resolutions often call for measures such as increasing the transparency of police spending of public funds, ceasing

unnecessary dam construction, and strengthening measures to stop bid rigging. In 2006, one resolution called for stopping legislation that would require the losing side in litigation to pay the attorney's fees of the winning side.

The annual meeting also becomes the starting point of an annual cycle. Each year's national coordinated requests for information are filed in late November or early December. Responses from local governments are generally received within a month. The ombudsmen are then ready to begin their analyses and to publish a new annual transparency ranking by a few months into the following year.

The NCOLC is managed by a board of three or four directors elected at the annual meeting. Typically, the directors are somewhat dispersed geographically. The directors meet approximately six times a year. The attorney whose offices in Nagoya serve as the NCOLC's national office is the network's executive director and is responsible for administrative activities.

The NCOLC has subcommittees to coordinate work on specific topics. Some of the current subcommittees focus on such issues as bid rigging, public works, outside audits, police information, and information disclosure rankings.

### ***Replication and Scaling Up***

Japan's legal training system is highly centralized. Historically, the great majority of Japanese lawyers graduate from only five universities. Wherever lawyers work, they must pass a single nationwide examination and spend a lengthy period studying at a national training institute in Tokyo. They must also become members of a single national federation of bar associations. Accordingly, personal and institutional ties among lawyers are close. For this reason, the NCOLC was able to establish a national network quickly.

However, given the small number of lawyers, large-scale expansion of the network is unlikely. Nevertheless, the NCOLC has spawned new organizations with related purposes, including the Citizen Center for Information Disclosure and Police Net. The latter was formed in 2006 and focuses on monitoring police activities and seeking to eliminate the improper use of funds and other illegal activities.

*Sources:* Repeta 1999; Web site of the Information Clearinghouse Japan (<http://www.clearinghouse.org/>); Web site of the Information Disclosure Citizen Center (<http://www.jkcc.gr.jp/>); Web site of the National Citizen Ombudsmen Liaison Council (<http://www.ombudsman.jp/>).

### **CHILDREN'S REPORT CARD SURVEYS, CHILDREN'S MOVEMENT FOR CIVIC AWARENESS, BANGALORE, INDIA**

The power of credible sources of information to mobilize public action and create informed advocacy programs has been well documented in recent publications on governance. One such well-documented and globally replicated effort is the citizen report card initiative in Bangalore, India, pioneered by the Public Affairs Centre (PAC). Anchored in the twin concepts of measurement and comparison, citizen report cards are increasingly seen as a potent social accountability tool for making governments, especially providers of public utilities, more responsive and accountable.

The efficiency and effectiveness of public services in a country are important determinants of the productivity, progress, and quality of life of its people. In 1993, Bangalore, like other cities in India, was straining under the weight of its inadequate and inefficient public services. A number of factors contributed to this, most notably, the administrative and political constraints under which public

agencies operated, coupled with the rapid expansion of urban areas without a corresponding expansion of resources. In addition, widespread corruption, abuse of discretion, and inadequate oversight and corrective actions by the government contributed to the deterioration of public services. The lack of organized and collective action by citizens, civil society, and the media combined to stifle public service agencies' responsiveness to the public and their motivation to improve services even within the limits of their available resources.

Over the past 10 years, citizen report cards have been replicated, scaled up, and adapted in various settings across the world. The report card model has been applied to such diverse issues as the quality of health care services in public hospitals, the delivery of education in government schools, the public distribution system, the impact of information technology, and the impact of economic liberalization on small and medium industries.

### ***Scope and Description of the Intervention***

One unique adaptation of the citizen report card is the children's report card survey, which is conducted by children each year in Bangalore. Members of the Children's Movement for Civic Awareness (CMCA) have conducted report cards on civic issues in Bangalore, beginning with the roads survey in 2000.

Launched in 14 schools in Bangalore in 2000 as a small initiative to foster civic and environmental consciousness among children, the CMCA has since instituted civic clubs in more than 180 schools in Bangalore, Bidar, Hubli Dharwad, and Mumbai. Since its inception, more than 7,000 children have been engaged in civic and environmental activities.

A survey on the theme of the year is an annual CMCA feature, whereby civic club members become field investigators and interview adults in their areas of residence. The survey assesses the public's awareness of the issue and elicits their opinions. The findings are compiled, analyzed, and presented in the form of a report card at a public function to which officials of various service agencies, celebrities, and the media are invited. Over the years, civic club members have undertaken a variety of report cards or surveys as follows:

- *Roads survey (2000–01)*. This was the first children's survey and was conducted as part of PAC's civic awareness summer camps, in which 28 schools in Bangalore participated. The objective was to enable children to assess the quality of roads in Bangalore. In all, 23 roads, including 15 main roads and 8 crossroads, in the areas around four civil awareness camps were chosen for the survey. The roads survey complemented work by PAC's Citizen Panel examining the quality of roads in Bangalore and took place the same year PAC released its *Guide to Monitoring the Quality of Road Works*, an attempt to demystify the process of road works and enable citizens to hold the government accountable for the poor quality of roads in Bangalore. The survey methodology was visual observations based on a checklist of various components of about 300 meters of each road. Each road was surveyed by a team of four students age 12 to 14, led by a trained volunteer. The children were first briefed on the need to drain water from roads to maintain their quality using a three-dimensional model that showed the various components of a typical urban road. The CMCA survey revealed such deficiencies as ineffective drainage systems, unusable footpaths, and many potholes. The children presented their findings to the municipal commissioner of Bangalore at a public function that made headlines in local newspapers, demonstrating the value of this kind of intervention in attracting media attention. The outcome was that the municipal commissioner instructed his officials to take immediate steps to upgrade the roads covered in the survey.

- *Polythene bag survey (2001–02)*. This survey of people’s practices and their awareness of the environmental hazards caused by polythene bags also aimed to assess how much citizens were willing to reduce the use of plastic bags and cups.
- *Water survey (2002–03)*. This survey of people’s awareness about water conservation, access to water, and quality of water in Bangalore was also intended to throw light on patterns of water consumption in the city.
- *Garbage survey (2003–04)*. This survey looked at public awareness of and waste management practices in Bangalore. It aimed to assess the level and quality of access to garbage disposal facilities (door-to-door collection service) and the extent of ongoing waste minimization efforts at the household level.
- *Tree survey (2004–05)*. This survey looked at people’s opinions and awareness of greenery in the city. It was complemented by a group called the Investigation Brigade, which sought to draw the attention of key stakeholders to the decline in greenery and to seek their views on this decline.

### ***Objectives***

The main aim of the CMCA is to educate and actively engage young people in the process of reclaiming civic virtues and citizenship and complement the ongoing efforts of CSOs. The objectives of the children’s report cards were as follows:

- To enhance both children’s and citizens’ awareness of an issue
- To shape children’s perspectives on an issue
- To provide a conduit for children’s outreach to the community
- To build the interpersonal and analytical skills of civic club members
- To initiate advocacy to improve public services through social accountability and transparency
- To raise people’s levels of awareness
- To influence people’s opinions about a particular issue

### ***Tools and Approaches***

PAC’s citizen report cards are an aggregate of public ratings of different aspects of service quality built on scientific random sample surveys of users of different public services (utilities) in a city. The specific aspects addressed in a typical citizen report card survey include availability of service, level of use, satisfaction, service standards, major problems with the service, effectiveness of grievance redress systems, corruption encountered, and other hidden costs borne by citizens because of poor service.

The children’s survey is usually completed over three weeks in October–November. A typical citizen report card study is organized along the following lines:

- *Designing the questionnaire for the survey*. The CMCA team designs the questionnaire, which usually contains 15 to 20 questions. The questionnaire is then translated into the local language. The field survey is entirely administered by children.
- *Identifying the sample for the survey*. The sample of respondents is chosen based on geographic proximity to the school and the children’s place of residence. Given the wide spread of civic clubs across the city, the sample covers a cross-section of neighborhoods in

Bangalore. As children conduct the field investigations, their safety and convenience are accorded top priority in the design of the survey; therefore the sampling cannot be based strictly on rigorous statistical principles. Thus caution must be exercised when generalizing the findings of the survey.

- *Training and orienting survey enumerators.* Before each survey, CMCA resource persons train volunteers, who in turn orient the children about the issue and explain the objectives of the survey and how to conduct the interviews. Volunteers then supervise the conduct of the survey.
- *Conducting the survey.* Pairs of students interview, on average, five households and three commercial establishments (shops, offices, nursing homes, schools, restaurants, and so on) in their locality. At the end of the interview, each respondent is given a pamphlet to fulfill the objective of enhancing citizens' awareness about the issue in question. The children also carry posters with them and have generally succeeded in convincing the owners of commercial establishments to put up the posters at their premises. On average, 2,000 households and commercial establishments are interviewed.
- *Analyzing the data.* Formats for data entry are provided to each civic club and the relevant CMCA representative and civic club members compile the data. Data from all the civic clubs are then consolidated and analyzed.
- *Presenting the findings.* The children themselves present the findings at a public gathering with stakeholders present. The public event is usually well attended by the print and electronic media, which disseminate the findings widely for two reasons: (a) the unique nature of the initiative in that children are the main and most visible actors, and (b) the pressing nature of the issue itself.
- *Undertaking advocacy with the government.* The CMCA elicits promises from stakeholders, mainly various government departments, pertaining to the findings of its survey, and thereafter follows up on these assurances. In this way, it exerts influence on policy and on official decision making.

### ***Partners and Stakeholders***

The CMCA draws inspiration and support from a wide range of stakeholders and partners as follows:

- *PAC and Swabhimana.* The CMCA is the brainchild of these two organizations. PAC is an NGO dedicated to improving the quality of governance and Swabhimana is a coalition of CSOs whose vision is to make Bangalore a cleaner, greener, and safer place to live.
- *Volunteers.* Volunteers are the backbone of the CMCA and its success depends on the quality of the facilitation and leadership they provide.
- *Past and present civic club members and other students.* The civic consciousness of club members is transmitted to other children in their schools, to their family members, to their neighborhoods, and across the city, resulting in increased civic awareness. The CMCA terms this the ripple effect.
- *School staff and management and teacher coordinators.* Teachers are an important link between the CMCA and school management. Teacher coordinators are involved in all stages and activities of the CMCA.
- *Parents of civic club members.* Parents play a vital role in encouraging their children and are also targets of the ripple effect.

- *Community-based organizations.* Community-based organizations in Bangalore are kept abreast of the CMCA's activities and are highly appreciative of such activities.
- *Officials of government agencies.* Children visit government officials during the survey to get their feedback on the issue at hand. They later present the findings of the survey to officials at the public function, and thereafter visit them to resolve problems revealed by the report card findings.

### ***Resources***

PAC and a number of corporate entities provide financial support for the CMCA's activities. In terms of human resources, the PAC research team provides technical assistance in conducting the survey, from designing the questionnaire to analyzing the data. The CMCA also gets inputs from subject experts when designing the questionnaire.

### ***Constraints and Problems***

Although highly innovative in nature, the children's report card surveys faced some methodological and operational constraints and problems, namely the following:

- The need to assure the safety of the children conducting the survey affected the statistical rigor with which random samples were selected.
- The response of those interviewed was generally encouraging, but in some cases children had to face relatively uncooperative respondents, which affected the children's enthusiasm.

### ***Outputs***

The media have played a major role in creating awareness of the children's report cards and sensitizing the public through the prominent publicity given to survey findings by the main newspapers. The quantification of information and the novelty of the method used are, in part, responsible for this response.

The children's report card studies have brought to light a wide range of issues, both quantitative and qualitative, and sent strong signals to public service providers. The use of a rating scale permitted respondents to quantify the extent of their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with public services, and quantification and rankings demand attention in a way that anecdotal data do not. They focus attention on specific agencies and services that can be embarrassing to those in charge because of the adverse publicity generated.

While not all issues highlighted by the surveys have had the desired impacts, some of the report cards have had significant results. For example, the 2000 roads survey resulted in action by the Bangalore City Corporation and the 2001 survey of the use of the plastic bags resulted in decisive action by the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board, which banned the use of certain types of polythene bags.

The uniqueness of the initiative and the professionalism and sincerity with which children conduct the surveys has made it easier for the CMCA to obtain corporate funds. Corporations believe in the cause, and with children as major actors in the initiative, are willing to sponsor CMCA activities.

The initiative has also provided the participating children with a unique set of skills. Not only do the children enjoy participating in the survey, but eventually the CMCA plans to have the children themselves design the questionnaire, conduct a preliminary analysis, and present the report cards.

### ***Institutionalization***

Currently, the CMCA has not forged institutional linkages with other programs and networks, but it is making a conscious effort to build such linkages with the aim of maximizing its impact.

### ***Replication and Scaling Up***

Since its inception, the CMCA has considerably expanded its scope of work. The CMCA has also recently made its presence felt in schools outside Bangalore with the initiation of civic clubs in 10 schools in Mumbai in 2004. In 2005, the commissioner of the Hubli-Dharwad Municipal Corporation contacted the CMCA with the intention of initiating a CMCA program in Hubli (a municipality in Karnataka). With technical assistance from the CMCA, the commissioner planned to start 122 civic clubs during the 2006–07 academic year.

*Sources:* Das 2004; Paul 2002; Paul and Sekhar 2000; PAC and Swabhimana 2000, 2001; Sekhar and Shah 2006.

### **Other Initiatives**

Given their innovative and unorthodox character, the following case studies do not fit into the previously defined thematic areas. Nevertheless, they are both strong examples of social accountability tools. The first initiative used public advocacy tools and campaigns to improve the electoral process, thereby enhancing citizens' elementary tool for holding politicians accountable: that is, voting. The second study deals with the growing phenomenon of innovations in information and communications technology and their potential impact on improvements in relation to the transparency and accountability of public service delivery.

#### **ELECTORAL INTERVENTIONS, PUBLIC AFFAIRS CENTRE, BANGALORE, INDIA**

In a democracy, the quality of governance is greatly influenced by its political institutions, processes, and leaders. In India, where elected representatives are the key architects of development in their respective constituencies, improvements in the quality of electoral processes are reflected in important improvements in the quality of governance. Improving the quality of elections is therefore crucial for effective policy making, development planning, and policy implementation.

The past few decades have witnessed rapid deterioration in India's democratic way of life. Across the country, democratic processes and institutions have come to be characterized by a lack of transparency and accountability. Abuses of money and power, an increasing number of elected representatives with criminal records, and asymmetrical information flows, along with a rise in caste-based political mobilization, have frustrated voters and alienated citizens from the electoral system. People attribute the ills plaguing Indian society to those in power, namely, politicians and the bureaucracy, while others point to apathetic, indifferent, and illiterate citizens as the root cause of the problem. At the same time, political institutions seldom reflect the mandate of the people, and therefore lack legitimacy.

#### ***Scope and Description of the Initiative***

In this context in 1996, PAC sought to intervene in the electoral arena to increase citizen involvement and interest and to stimulate informed choices in the selection of candidates. Since then, a number of civil society groups have sought greater involvement of citizens in the electoral process. This effort has encompassed a series of programs, ranging from cleansing the electoral rolls to studying the backgrounds of candidates and disseminating the information, undertaking advocacy with political parties against nominating people with criminal backgrounds, and launching motivation campaigns to

increase voter turnout. The impact of these initiatives is partly reflected in reforms pertaining to various electoral issues and problems over the last five years.

PAC is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the quality of governance in India that focuses on areas in which the public can play a proactive role. PAC has almost a decade of experience in the area of electoral reforms. Its interventions have led it to believe that any improvement in the quality of governance depends on a corresponding improvement in the quality of elected leaders.

With the humble beginning of a small but proactive citizens' initiative to stimulate informed choices during municipal elections in Bangalore in 1996, PAC has continuously striven to enhance transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in electoral processes. PAC's campaigns in collaboration with citizens' groups and other NGOs have endeavored to stimulate informed choices in parliamentary, assembly, urban local body, and village government (*panchayat*) elections.

PAC has initiated several national and regional campaigns, both independently and by networking with like-minded organizations. Dissemination of relevant information, application of innovative tools, and creative use of the media have been some of the key strategies used. Over time, a marked change has been noted in the responses of concerned officials, and many administrative reforms have also taken place to make the electoral system more citizen-friendly. The electoral interventions have made some difference to the lives of citizens of Bangalore and other parts of Karnataka, and have encouraged groups across the state and the country to undertake similar initiatives.

### ***Objectives***

PAC's main objectives are as follows:

- To enhance transparency and accountability in the electoral process
- To enable voters to make informed choices
- To enhance citizen participation during revisions of electoral rolls
- To increase voter turnout at the polls
- To secure the rights of voters
- To promote the free and fair conduct of elections

### ***Tools and Approaches***

PAC's electoral initiatives draw on a wide range of public advocacy tools. The following paragraphs present some examples of PAC's campaigns.

***Know Your Candidate Program and Informed Choices.*** Over the years, PAC has endeavored to give people informed choices during elections. PAC partners with leading daily newspapers and residents' welfare associations to disseminate information about candidates to voters. When PAC initiated its first experiment in 1996, no provision existed for candidates to disclose information about themselves. PAC initiated an innovative exercise, the first in the country, during the 11th parliamentary elections in Karnataka, when it collaborated with the *Deccan Herald*, a leading English-language daily newspaper, to collect and disseminate information from candidates belonging to the major political parties. After reporters collected details from candidates regarding their educational and criminal backgrounds, plans, and priorities, PAC analyzed the data and the media publicized it. The exercise highlighted the importance of transparency with respect to disclosure by candidates running for office. The campaign received a boost with a landmark Supreme Court verdict in 2003 that made it mandatory for candidates to declare their criminal antecedents, assets and

liabilities, and educational qualifications at the time of filing nomination papers. The court's verdict itself was a result of intense civil society advocacy under the banner of the National Campaign for Electoral Reforms, in which PAC participated.

***Campaign during the Revision of Electoral Rolls.*** PAC supports the Election Commission of Karnataka during the yearly summary revision of electoral rolls.<sup>8</sup> The summary revision, which is conducted simultaneously across the country, aims to provide citizens with an opportunity to include their names on the list of voters and exercise their fundamental right to vote. Before elections, during the summary revision, the names of eligible voters are publicized in designated public offices for citizens to ascertain whether their names have been omitted. Unfortunately, lack of adequate publicity and coordinated efforts by the Election Commission and the Bangalore City Corporation has resulted in consistently poor turnout during summary revisions. Immediately before the parliamentary elections in 1998, media reports pointed to a large-scale omission of names from the electoral rolls. Against this background, PAC undertook to assist the authorities in publicizing the summary revision of electoral rolls and the need for people to verify that their names were on the rolls. PAC effectively harnessed the media and other networks, such as residents' welfare associations, to disseminate information regarding the summary revision. During the summary revision of 2003, PAC partnered with NGOs and radio stations in six cities across the country to organize awareness campaigns by disseminating leaflets translated into local languages. PAC's campaigns also facilitate the redress of grievances by means of telephone help lines. PAC identifies volunteers in various towns and cities in Karnataka, who are then supplied with information kits that contain details about the summary revisions, important dates, locations, and similar information to help them effectively staff the help lines. Residents' welfare associations supported by PAC have also verified discrepancies in the list of voters. In 2001, PAC launched a campaign to inform the public about the verification and to give them information about how to participate. Armed with information kits provided by PAC, residents' welfare associations conducted random verifications in their localities. Groups reported several discrepancies on the rolls, such as the names of deceased persons, which were reported to the relevant authorities.

***Voter Awareness and Motivation Campaign.*** PAC has observed that low voter turnout in urban areas is directly linked to lack of information about the electoral process. An inadequate flow of information to citizens, together with an indifferent bureaucracy, has, to a large extent, resulted in an apathetic urban middle class. PAC's voter motivation campaigns have targeted this segment of the population in particular. PAC has partnered with residents' welfare associations, cable television networks, radio stations, industry and business associations, and advertising agencies to conduct a program aimed at motivating citizens, especially those in urban areas, to "go out and vote" and to educate them on the need to prevent fraudulent votes from being cast. Such campaigns have also focused on initiating dialogue with the major political parties to pressure them into selecting honest and competent candidates. PAC launched a massive campaign during the 2004 parliamentary and state legislative elections. The theme of the campaign was "Vote Today, Don't Curse Tomorrow," developed by a leading advertising firm. A nationwide media campaign was launched and a series of promotional spots featuring celebrities were aired on national and regional television channels and radio broadcasting networks. Mass e-mailing through industry and business associations reached more than 3,500 companies.

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<sup>8</sup> A summary revision is a process aimed at providing citizens with an opportunity to include their names on the voters list. The Election Commission of India conducts this periodical revision to update the rolls once a year or just before any elections. This is also an occasion for citizens to object to the inclusion of names of nonresidents and the deceased, to correct personal details, and to make changes with regard to transpositions.

**Capacity Building for CSOs.** PAC has developed resource kits on elections for urban and rural local bodies as a guide to help NGOs educate, sensitize, and motivate people to vote. The kits contain information on how to conduct various electoral campaigns and PAC resource persons use the kits in their training programs. This kind of training and orientation on elections has generated immense interest across the state. In July 2003, the State Election Commission of Karnataka extended the disclosure law to local government elections, thereby joining the handful of states that took a proactive stance on voluntary disclosure at the grassroots level. The elections to village local governments in Karnataka in February–March 2005 gave PAC an opportunity to work in rural areas for the first time. With the objective of enhancing the quality of local government polls and promoting informed participation by voters, PAC embarked on a four-pronged campaign for effective local governance. This involved (a) training local civil society groups in several districts on how to verify electoral rolls; (b) scrutinizing the affidavits of candidates; (c) training candidates, especially women, how to file their nomination papers; and (d) organizing public meetings at which candidates declared their past achievements and their future plans for a particular village. The program met with an enthusiastic response from villagers and CSOs.

**Public Advocacy.** PAC has made use of a variety of means for its dissemination efforts as follows:

- *Newspapers.* Leading dailies like the *Deccan Herald* and the *Times of India* have supported the informed choices campaigns. Before the Supreme Court ruling, reporters collected information from candidates and disseminated the analyses conducted by PAC. English and local-language newspapers have carried the information leaflets about candidates compiled by PAC during election campaigns.
- *Film.* PAC's film, "Choose the Right Councillor Programme," made during the Bangalore City Corporation elections in 1996, was shown to interested groups across the country. The film has been used as an effective advocacy aid to help citizens make informed choices during elections and to encourage organized groups to undertake similar efforts.
- *Cable television, radio, Web sites, and mass e-mails.* PAC has used these means to motivate and inform citizens on how to register to vote and how to vote. Radio stations such as Radio City 91 FM in Bangalore and Radio Mirchi in Mumbai, and popular Web sites like Indiatimes and Microsoft Network India have supported numerous campaigns by publicizing the help line or the PAC Web site. Mass e-mails through industry and business associations have also conveyed PAC's messages to thousands of companies.
- *Street theater.* During the special summary revision of the voters' list in 2004, PAC engaged the services of Somepoorna, a group of young software professionals who dabble in street theater. The group conducted a street play in prominent locations in Bangalore to motivate young people to participate in the electoral process.

### **Partners and Stakeholders**

Partner organizations were resident welfare associations in the city, Swabhimana, city-based cable television and radio networks, corporate networks and e-groups, and advertising agencies. PAC's campaigns have targeted two main groups of stakeholders: (a) voters, especially young people; and (b) officials responsible for managing the electoral process.

### **Resources**

Agencies such as the National Foundation of India and the Ford Foundation have provided funding for PAC's electoral interventions. In addition, corporations have provided many services for free, as have television and radio networks and Web sites. Advertising and public relations agencies and production houses have either heavily reduced their fees or supported campaigns at no charge.

As concerns human resources, PAC's core team consists of a small number of full-time staff members. In addition, campaigns rely heavily on a pool of volunteers, usually members of residents' welfare associations and various CSOs. Volunteers help PAC staff with a variety of tasks ranging from disseminating information leaflets to coordinating with election authorities in their respective localities, conducting exit polls, verifying voter lists, and organizing face-to-face meetings with candidates.

### ***Constraints and Problems***

PAC's electoral interventions face some critical challenges and constraints, namely:

- *Difficulty in scaling up.* Given the magnitude of the influences working against PAC's interests, scaling up is an uphill task and civil society efforts are a drop in the ocean. At times the messages conveyed by CSOs tend to get lost in the deluge of propaganda by political parties.
- *Lack of resources.* Although campaigns are resource intensive, donors may not be willing to provide resources for them. Much time and effort is required to convince them to donate funds, as the results of the campaign are not immediately visible, and neither are the outputs always tangible.
- *Slow and not inclusive poll reform process.* The low level of involvement by the public is a major cause of the current state of affairs. Citizens' apathy can be attributed to the fact that more often than not, politicians, once elected, cease to act as representatives of the people that elected them. Moreover, elections do not appeal to people as much as more tangible issues, for example, children's rights.
- *Lack of research on the complex patterns of voters' behavior.* Multifarious influences make it difficult to determine voting patterns.
- *Candidates' wariness of the information dissemination campaign.* Elections in India have traditionally been fought on the basis of caste loyalties rather than informed choice. The right to information in elections is an extremely recent phenomenon, which has the potential to change the nature of politics. Not everyone has welcomed the attempt by NGOs to disseminate information about candidates, some of which could harm their prospects. During the 2003 elections in Mahadevpura, a small municipality on the outskirts of Bangalore, PAC staff and volunteers were physically harassed by supporters of a political party who mistook them to be supporters of another political party launching a smear campaign against their candidate. It is imperative to inform candidates about the campaign beforehand and to ensure their support.
- *Inadvertent printing of the wrong information.* During its information dissemination campaigns, PAC is extremely careful when transferring information from affidavits to leaflets and brochures. Knowing that a simple mistake could result in a serious backlash, PAC staff take care to double and triple check information on their leaflets. Until it is confident that partner groups can do the data transfer on their own, PAC staff do it for them. Nevertheless, some lapses have occurred. When an error occurs, PAC immediately issues clarifications in leading newspapers and withdraws erroneous leaflets. Despite threats, PAC has continued undeterred with its information dissemination campaign.
- *Citizens' lack of faith in campaigns when systems are not geared to respond to reforms.* Citizens tend to lose faith in civil society groups when the government machinery does not respond to CSOs' interventions by implementing immediate corrective measures.

## **Outputs**

Given the current nature of the electoral arena in India, PAC has had only a limited influence. Nonetheless, PAC's interventions have yielded several tangible results, namely:

- *Highlighting the importance of disclosure by candidates during the electoral process.* PAC's campaigns were a precursor to the Supreme Court ruling on mandatory electoral disclosure. Groups across the country have emulated the PAC model, which has also sparked interest among civic groups in other developing nations such as Bangladesh. Watchdog groups like Election Watch have arisen in recent years that do precisely what PAC had initiated in 1996: monitor the backgrounds of candidates and disseminate information about them. The recently enacted national right to information legislation has further reinforced citizens' right to know.
- *Facilitating informed choices.* PAC's informed choices campaigns have always concluded with exit polls to assess their impact. Exit poll results indicate that voters who had received the information had used it when making their electoral choices.
- *Increasing voter registration.* Based on PAC's suggestions, the Bangalore City Corporation undertook various initiatives during the special summary revision of 2004, such as encouraging online registration, designating post offices as registration centers, and setting up help desks. PAC supplemented these efforts with a multimedia awareness campaign. As a result of these initiatives, the corporation and the Election Commission confirmed that the number of registrations in and around Bangalore had tripled compared with the previous year.
- *Increasing voter awareness and participation.* The deluge of calls received on the help lines demonstrates that citizens are eager to participate in the electoral process, but are unaware of how to do so. Clear and patient replies from PAC staff have motivated callers to participate in the electoral process.
- *Disseminating information.* In 2002, PAC published a voting guide in a number of regional languages as an educational tool to create awareness among voters on various electoral matters. Excerpts from the guide are disseminated as information leaflets during campaigns.
- *Changing officials' attitudes.* Senior officials of the State Election Commission and the Election Commission of India are now eager and willing to work with PAC and act on its recommendations. A change is also apparent in the attitude of Bangalore City Corporation officials in charge of revising the list of voters. During the 2003 revision, PAC staff made random calls to ascertain the efficacy of help desks set up by the Bangalore City Corporation and noted that officials were extremely helpful in guiding citizens to their nearest polling place and patiently answering queries. PAC staff also observed that officials were present in all offices on the last Sunday of the revision. This was a sea change in the attitude of officials, and the former deputy commissioner of the Bangalore City Corporation has publicly acknowledged PAC's role in this welcome change.
- *Undertaking research and analysis.* PAC's work on elections is not just about promoting citizen action and informed choice, but also involves meticulous research and subsequent dissemination of its analyses. PAC's 2005 publication  *Holding a Mirror to the New Lok Sabha*  presents the findings of a systematic analysis of data taken from affidavits by 541 (of 543) members of parliament elected in 2004. The publication has been widely disseminated to legislators across the country and has significant policy implications.
- *Building the capacity of CSOs.* Before PAC's electoral interventions, CSOs were unwilling to think beyond their regular concerns and participate in the larger realm of governance. The capacity-building aspect of PAC's campaigns has enabled residents' welfare associations and CSOs in smaller towns and cities, and even villages, to advocate for better governance. The

Supreme Court verdict on mandatory disclosure by candidates has further strengthened their resolve to have a positive impact on elections. The increased demand for training has resulted in the creation of a PAC capacity-building component with a focus on groups in remote and backward districts of Karnataka. The demand for such training has also come from civil society groups in parts of Africa, where electoral reforms are becoming a major issue in civil society circles.

### ***Institutionalization***

As mentioned earlier, PAC's informed choices campaign has been boosted by numerous recently enacted electoral disclosure laws. The campaign for electoral reforms has gathered momentum and has attained a national character. From a small experiment in 1996, PAC has moved beyond Bangalore and has developed links with groups across Karnataka and in other states that have partnered with PAC during several campaigns.

PAC has interacted regularly with the State Election Commission and the Election Commission of Karnataka on various reforms. Both agencies take PAC's recommendations seriously. In addition, PAC's credibility and commitment have ensured the support of leading newspapers. During elections, PAC is regularly asked for analyses, which are widely disseminated. Neighborhood newspapers also carry regular features during campaigns.

### ***Replication and Scaling Up***

The campaign for electoral reforms has now spread to various parts of the country and assumed a national character. Several civil society groups, such as the Association for Democratic Reforms, the People's Union for Civil Liberties, the Catalyst Trust, People's Power, and Agni, are actively pursuing the common goal of cleaning up the electoral process by engaging various stakeholders in the government for reform. Whereas some of these initiatives have already led to path-breaking reforms, others have created a groundswell of public opinion and participation in the election process.

Programs have also been replicated by organizations in other states, notably People's Power in Andhra Pradesh, Agni and Youth for Voluntary Action in Maharashtra, and Election Watch. PAC's informed choices campaign has also been successfully adapted in Bangladesh.

*Sources:* Manjunath 1998; PAC 2002, 2006; Paul 2003, 2004; Paul, Poornima, and Rao 2005; Web site of PAC (<http://www.pacindia.org>); various issues of *Public Eye*.

## **PUBLIC PROCUREMENT SERVICE, REPUBLIC OF KOREA**

To fight corruption and increase transparency, some countries have launched e-governance systems, which promote the use of communications technology such as the Internet and mobile telephones to open up government processes and enable greater public access to information. E-government is the online publication of information that enables citizens to download application forms for a variety of government services. It can also include the actual delivery of services, such as filing a tax return or renewing a license. More sophisticated systems facilitate the processing of online payments.

Electronic procurement (e-procurement), an important component of e-government, combines the use of Internet technology with procurement best practices to streamline the purchasing process and reduce costs. E-procurement increases transparency and probity by keeping a traceable record of government transactions online. A comprehensive e-procurement system includes three main components: (a) information and registration, (b) e-purchasing, and (c) e-tendering. Studies in developed countries have shown that e-procurement benefits the state through reduced monetary and administrative costs for organizations using the system, increased business opportunities for

suppliers, and more efficient use of tax money. E-procurement has been applied successfully in the European Union and in countries such as Japan, Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Even though e-government has emerged worldwide as an important tool for government reforms, citizen participation is lagging. The concept of e-government, beginning with an emphasis on improving efficiency and progressing toward a more “customer-centric” effort, is now being recast to include the transition toward participatory government that seeks to realize e-democracy. However, a report by the United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance (2003) points to a situation where despite major advances in the concept of e-government, citizen participation is lower than expected, probably because of the low levels of Internet penetration in many developing countries.

Even though Korea has achieved the one of the highest level of e-government service in the world, the issue of low citizen participation has emerged as a major challenge.<sup>9</sup> A 2003 analysis of e-government usage indicates that whereas the percentage of civil servants using e-government to obtain job applications was 45 percent, with the exception of passive information searches, citizens’ usage rate for more active public administration services was at a low level.

To transform the quality of e-government to enhance participation by citizens, the government of Korea embarked on an undertaking to improve its transparency and efficiency. Participatory e-government that is citizen oriented entails innovations in work methods, government service reforms, and information resource management. As a result of its efforts, Korea became the fourth country with an electronic bidding process, and government-to-government services were extended to government-to-business services. Even before the launch of the government e-procurement system (GePS) in October 2002, 9.4 million people belonging to 1,500 organizations participated in electronic bidding for activities worth a total of US\$13 billion.

### ***Scope and Description of the Initiative***

Korea began to lay the foundations for e-government in the late 1970s. Through several information system projects in 1980s, the government established a high-speed communications network and begun storing vital government records, such as resident registration, real estate transactions, and vehicle records, in a digital format. By the mid-1990s, the focus had shifted to efficiency-oriented e-government, with major information being put into databases and the development of operations processing systems to improve efficiency. Information technology has been applied to enhance key government functions, such as levying custom duties and approving patents, while also fostering interagency collaboration. A nationwide information super highway was built shortly after the turn of the century and has become an important part of the e-government infrastructure. At the same time, the government prepared a coherent implementation plan that it used as a basis for constructing a service-oriented system of e-government by focusing its efforts on service improvements, such as allowing the sharing of information among government agencies and the linking of their operations and activities.

Korea’s e-procurement is partly a natural outgrowth of its information technology culture: 70 percent of households have a high-speed Internet connection. Having achieved what is generally recognized

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<sup>9</sup> An index of municipal Web sites worldwide found that Seoul remains as the top-ranked city in relation to e-governance performance. The research was conducted jointly by the e-Governance Institute of Rutgers University-Newark and the Global e-Policy e-Government Institute of the Graduate School of Governance, Sungkyunkwan University, Korea. The survey was cosponsored by the United Nations Division for Public Administration and Development Management and the American Society for Public Administration. This index is the only systematic effort to evaluate digital governance in municipalities throughout the world.

as the most advanced telecommunications infrastructure in the world, the next step was to have the appropriate systems in place in the government. In November 2001, the E-Government Special Committee, which consisted of government officials and private sector specialists, was appointed to plan and budget the application of information technology to e-government nationwide. The most important of the 11 tasks selected for e-government was GePS.

The Public Procurement Service (PPS), the central procuring agency, operates GePS. The PPS provides around 30,000 Korean public institutions with the goods and services they require to carry out their responsibilities. Before the introduction of e-procurement, the PPS's procedures were cumbersome and involved a huge amount of paperwork and frequent visits to PPS offices. The PPS underwent a reform of its entire procurement system to reduce the level of inconvenience and inefficiency and to eliminate corruption.

GePS was inaugurated in September 2002. It processes complicated procedures and paperwork by digitalizing all procedures from purchase requests to payments and drastically reducing the extent of documentation (<http://www.g2b.go.kr/>). Since 2003, the annual transaction volume of GePS has grown by 20 percent every year. Today GePS is the world's largest cyber market, where 35,000 public institutions and 150,000 private companies trade about US\$48 billion worth of goods a year. About 93 percent of total bidding in the public sector is handled on GePS, cutting an estimated US\$4.8 billion a year in indirect costs for private companies.

### ***Objectives***

The objective of GePS is to enhance the efficiency, fairness, and transparency of the government's procurement administration by establishing a nationwide, Web-based procurement system that handles all procurement procedures electronically. It was aligned with the nationwide strategy known as Cyber Korea 21 (1999–2002) to build an online, knowledge-based system to improve national competitiveness and the quality of life and to develop Korea as one of the most advanced countries with respect to information technology.

### ***Tools and Approaches***

GePS is a single window for comprehensive information on procurement by all public organizations, including all information about national procurement projects, procurement requests, bids, contracting, and payment. GePS is also the single repository of vendor data for the entire public sector. The main features of the GePS government-to-business approach are as follows:

- *Public announcement of all government projects for bidding.* Private contractors can bid online for projects by various government agencies after registering a single time on the government procurement Web site.
- *Online process.* Government agencies and private contractors can use GePS to complete the entire procurement process, including announcing a public project for bidding, submitting bids, selecting a winning bidder, signing the government contract agreement, monitoring the completion of the service or supply contract, and paying for services. The process can be monitored in real time.
- *Establishment of a standardized category system for procurement supplies.* The sorting and identification of procurement supplies that were previously managed by each government agency independently were changed to comply with a set of governmentwide standards for public procurement. These changes allowed government procurement to be compatible across agencies and to comply with e-commerce standards with which citizens were familiar.

The shift to e-procurement involved the following stages:

- *Converting procurement operations into e-commerce.* After the initial strategic planning by the Ministry of Planning and Budget, the PPS, with its experience as the central procurement agency for the past 50 years and development and administration of the electronic data interchange and e-commerce since 1997, began building the system. The next step was to harness Korea's well-developed Internet infrastructure by means of a step-by-step process as follows:
  - An electronic signature is used to authenticate the identity of the sender of a message or the signer of a document and to ensure that the original content of the message or document that has been sent is unchanged. E-signatures are easily transportable, cannot be imitated by someone else, and can be automatically time stamped. This ensures that the sender cannot deny having sent the original signed message.
  - By sharing various types of information, including data on suppliers, GePS users were no longer required to repeatedly submit the same documents.
  - Through its connections with 11 guarantee agencies, GePS ensured the online submission of bonds for prepayment, tenders, performance, and so on.
  - GePS' association with 13 major commercial banks shortened the time taken to pay contractors.
- *Reorganizing from an administration-centered to a customer-oriented service.* In July 1999, the PPS began reforms that overhauled its organization and culture. By establishing the PPS's vision and mission and letting staff know of the goal of the reform, the PPS encouraged them to participate. User manuals and multimedia resources were distributed to contractors and government employees to increase their understanding of the GePS. The change in staff attitudes resulted in a steady increase in customer satisfaction.
- *Making procurement-related information available to the public.* The PPS rooted out sources of corruption by opening up procurement-related information to the public. Information was put in the public domain by means of the Internet on a real-time basis and the participation of external experts such as NGOs in the procurement process.
- *Linking the GePS to outside systems.* The provision of a one-stop service through its links to the online systems of other institutions such as ministries, associations, and financial bodies is one of GePS' advantages.

### ***Partners and Stakeholders***

The common feature of each major e-government initiative was the need for an information network that would link the systems and databases of each agency through a seamless network, which required the cooperation of all government agencies. The following key stakeholders and factors contributed to the success of GePS:

- *Active government support.* The involvement of President Kim Dae-Jung, vice ministers, government agency directors, and midlevel government employees was extremely helpful in making the project a success. Ministers from various government agencies gave their full support to the E-Government Special Committee. Nongovernment members of the committee carried out their assigned tasks conscientiously, and in the space of two years, the committee held more than 50 working-level committee meetings. The president's strong support helped smooth bureaucratic processes across agencies during committee meetings.
- *Support of the National Assembly.* Political support in the form of legislation and sufficient government funding were the preconditions for making the 11 major e-government initiatives

a success. The Millennium Democratic Party formed a special committee to develop and promote e-government services and processes. Assembly members from the Grand National Party also supported the e-government initiative.

- *Collaboration between government-funded agencies and the private sector.* The existence of a highly developed private sector in the area of information systems and information technology played an important role, in that the requisite systems were put into place by private sector contractors. In addition, government-funded agencies, including the National Computerization Agency, the Korea Information Society Development Institute, and the Korea Education and Research Information Service, were also involved.
- *World-class Internet infrastructure.* Korea has historically been among the top five countries in terms of Internet connections, with 70 percent of the population being Internet users. This infrastructure helped ensure problem-free e-bidding.

### **Resources**

GePS cost a total of US\$24.9 million.

### **Outputs**

GePs resulted in the following improvements to the government's procurement system:

- *Allowing paperless transactions.* A unique feature of GePS is the ability to conduct the entire procurement process online. This was achieved, in part, through the simplification of documents and the development of prompt e-payment methods. Previously, contractors would have to submit numerous documents, fill out lengthy forms, and visit many different government agencies to conform to the requirements for participating in public bids.
- *Providing online access to information.* To ensure the ease of online bidding, GePS provides integrated domestic bidding information: according to the National Contract Act, all bid information must be placed on the system. Contractors can visit GePS and gain access to all information about public bids across all government agencies. The government procurement brochure that carried listings of future public bids is no longer published.
- *Simplifying the bidding process.* In the past, contractors were required to register their companies with each government agency to be allowed to bid on agency-specific projects. GePS has eliminated these redundant processes. Once contractors have registered with the system, they can bid on any project by any government agency.
- *Creating a business-friendly environment.* This is evidenced by high participation in e-bidding.
- *Classifying commodities.* Following the introduction of GePS, government items for procurement were categorized more efficiently, enabling government agencies to select and procure supplies more conveniently.
- *Saving government resources.* The simplification of the entire procurement process has resulted in major savings of government resources estimated at approximately US\$20.3 billion since its launch.
- *Enhancing transparency.* As all steps of the procurement process are now carried out online, contractors and civil servants in charge of procurement do not need to meet face-to-face. This has had a significant impact on the extent of corruption in the procurement process.

### ***Institutionalization***

Bidding information used to be disseminated in gazettes and newspapers, but must now be provided online. To this end, relevant laws and regulations had to be revised to establish the legal foundations for handling procurement operations electronically.

### ***Replication and Scaling Up***

The completion of a government-to-business system and the enactment of laws to govern the system resulted in an expansion of the government-to-business market in terms of both scope and scale. Other public institutions in Korea and procurement agencies in other countries could modify the PPS's e-procurement system for their own use.

*Sources:* Bhatnagar 2003; Fisher 2000; Special Committee of E-Government 2003; Web site of the Korean Overseas Information Service (<http://www.korea.net/>); Web site of the Public Procurement Service (<http://www.pps.go.kr/english/>); Web site of the United Nations Online Network in Public Administration and Finance (<http://www.unpan.org/>).

## Lessons Learned

According to Nobel laureate Sen (2005, p. 39): “Silence is a powerful enemy of social justice.” Nowhere does this statement resonate more powerfully than in the realm of social accountability. However, the cases discussed in this volume give reason for hope. These profiles of courage and innovativeness highlight how ordinary people can make a difference by asking the right questions at the right time in the right manner, or in other words, by making their voices heard, often backed by the power of information and knowledge. Although far from being comprehensive or representative, these vignettes highlight some enabling themes and approaches and also some areas of concern.

### Key Enablers

The case studies discussed in this volume reveal some cross-cutting concepts and applications that act as key enablers for social accountability, namely:

- *Responsiveness and voice.* Some of the cases have demonstrated the potency of blending state responsiveness with voices of the community. Instead of taking adversarial positions, these cases illustrate refreshing instances of state and community partnerships and proactive engagement. The key here seems to be strategic partnerships, mostly commencing as pilot projects that end up creating empowered processes that often become rooted and survive beyond the lifespan of the project.
- *Power of information.* Most of the cases demonstrate the emancipatory and empowering potential of information to usher in accountability. Whether the information is voluntary disclosure by state agencies or the generation of contested information by civil society groups, information has the potential to bring about change.
- *Local ownership.* The presence of a local “champion” to own and drive social accountability initiatives is crucial for generating support and participation, but the credibility and nonpartisan character of the local champion are critical.
- *Political buy-in.* Many institutional innovations and radical popular movements often piggyback onto charismatic individuals or institutional entrepreneurs. Often these pioneering interventions fail to engage political representatives, with the result that larger issues of institutionalization and scaling up often face political opposition. Some of the cases discussed here have underscored the critical need for political buy-in.
- *Local capacity building.* Many of the specific tools and approaches explored in this volume call for certain levels of competence and skills. The initiators of social accountability tools have recognized this and have emphasized the need to infuse local networks and organizations with the skills to own and sustain the interventions.

### Areas of Concern

Notwithstanding the potency of the documented tools and approaches, certain areas of concern need to be kept in perspective when exploring possibilities for replicating, adapting, and scaling up these tools, namely:

- *Fragility of civil society space.* An interesting observation that emerges from state-civil society dialectics is the fragility of the space for CSOs to challenge and contest the state on issues of accountability. The essence of civil society lies in its autonomy from the state, yet to

influence public policy, civil society institutions need to relate to the state. Total independence is virtually incompatible with political influence. The citizen is an agent and subject of politics, and is consequently constrained and protected by the state. The state also provides an integrative framework characterized by the rule of law and a certain degree of coherence without which civil society would rapidly become uncivil and potentially chaotic.

- *Urban focus.* Barring a few cases, most of the initiatives discussed in this volume are based in urban centers; thus there is a clear need to spread these kinds of initiatives to rural enclaves. The main challenge in this respect is building competencies and skills within rural populations. Also there is a dire need to translate publications on accountability into local languages. Existing documentation about most of these initiatives is in English, limiting the potential for wider outreach.
- *Challenges of adaptation and contextualization.* Global good practices are seldom relevant unless they are contextualized and adapted to suit local conditions and needs. The cases discussed here underscore this need to redesign and contextualize tools and approaches that build on local capacities and address local priorities.
- *Weak regional networking.* A striking observation that cuts across this collage of emergent social accountability initiatives in Asia is the weak networking and learning within the region. Given the social and political contexts within which these initiatives have emerged, there is a great deal of scope for replication and adaptation.

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*National Citizen Ombudsmen Liaison Council, Japan*

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*Public Procurement Service (PPS)*

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Seo-Gu, Daejeon, Korea 302-701  
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Fax: 82-42-472-2297  
Web site: <http://www.pps.go.kr/english/>

*Sirajganj Local Governance Development Fund Project (SLGDFP)*

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Web site: [http://www.uncdf.org/english/local\\_development/](http://www.uncdf.org/english/local_development/)

## Matrix of Social Accountability Initiatives in South Asia

	<i>Name of the Initiative</i>	<i>Name of the Organization</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Type of SA Tool</i>
1	Sirajganj Local Governance Development Fund Project	UNDP/UNDCDF	Bangladesh	Learning-by-doing, performance assessment tools and community mobilization approaches
2	Independent Budget Analysis	Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability	India	Budget analysis and expenditure monitoring
3	Citizens' Charters for Public Service Accountability	People's Power	India	Citizens' charters
4	Children's Report Card Surveys	Children's Movement for Civic Awareness	India	Citizen report cards (sample surveys of users of different public services )
5	Electoral Interventions	Public Affairs Centre	India	Public advocacy tools
6	Budget Transparency Movement	Indonesia Forum for Budget Transparency	Indonesia	Budget analysis and advocacy work
7	Participatory Gender Budget Formulation and Gender Budget Analysis	Indonesian Women's Coalition for Justice and Democracy	Indonesia	Budget analysis; budget training
8	Citizen Ombudsmen	National Citizen Ombudsmen Liaison Council	Japan	Freedom of information rules; The national "Openness Ranking"; Network activism-coordinated action, sharing information; Skillful use of the news media
9	Budget Analysis	ActionAid	Nepal	Budget analysis; participatory baseline studies
10	Social Audits	Community Information and Epidemiological Technologies	Pakistan	Social audits (baseline survey)
11	Public Procurement Service	Government of Republic of Korea	Republic of Korea	Electronic procurement (e-governance)
12	Citizen Monitoring of Infrastructure Projects	Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Government (CCAGG)	The Philippines	Participatory audits of infrastructure and expenditure projects
13	Textbook Count Program	Government Watch	The Philippines	Monitoring of the bidding process, quality control inspection and book deliveries



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