

Social Accountability Curriculum Development In South Asia

Workshop Report November 19-20, 2007 New Delhi, India

Background

The World Bank Institute aims to assist a select number of training institutions in South Asia to establish training programs on the topic of Social Accountability (Sac). The aim is to increase the number of social accountability specialists who can apply their skills for improved policies, budget and procurement oversight, and better governance and service delivery.¹ This workshop was a first step in that direction. Its objectives were to: (i) develop core curriculum on social accountability targeted to different stakeholders; and (ii) broaden a South Asia Network on Sac.

Held on November 19-20, 2007 in New Delhi, India, the workshop was attended by 30 Sac practitioners, both academicians and NGO representatives from the sub-continent, DfID and the Swiss Development Corporation, and World Bank staff. The effort was to systematically draw on the collective experience to come up with the basic elements of a curriculum for Sac literacy.

Day 1 of the workshop began with a World Bank presentation on the definition, frameworks and stakeholders of Sac, and the context for the Sac curriculum. This was followed by the keynote address, delivered by Mr. K. Raju, Principal Secretary, Panchayati Raj and Rural Development Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh. The second half of the day saw small group sessions deliberating on the overall framework for Sac curriculum. Each session was followed by an open discussion.

Having defined core content topics for Sac curriculum by the end of the first day, Day 2 began with small group sessions which were asked to focus on curriculum and training for specific target audiences. The ensuing plenary discussed the next steps towards the objective of building Sac curriculum.

¹ This need for centers of excellence in Sac was identified at a March 2007 Regional Workshop in Hyderabad on Social Accountability by several institutions present in that forum - Tata Institute for Social Sciences (TISS) and Yashwantrao Chavan Academy of Development Administration (YASHADA) in India. The demand from many additional institutions subsequently to explore the possibility of launching training programs in this topic further widened – to culminate in the brainstorming workshop on Sac curriculum

This report synthesizes the core messages and key action areas that emerged during the deliberations, in the effort towards institutionalizing a ‘social accountability curriculum.’

Setting the Context

Social accountability is defined as an approach toward building accountability that relies on civic engagement, i.e., in which it is ordinary citizens and/or civil society organisations that participate directly or indirectly in exacting accountability.

In a public sector context, social accountability refers to a broad range of actions and mechanisms that citizens, communities, independent media and civil society organizations can use to hold public officials and public servants accountable. These include, among others, participatory budgeting, public expenditure tracking, monitoring of public service delivery, investigative journalism, public commissions and citizen advisory boards. These citizen-driven accountability measures complement and reinforce conventional mechanisms of accountability such as political checks and balances, accounting and auditing systems, administrative rules and legal procedures.

Sac tools have gained widespread acceptance and application, particularly in service delivery. The effectiveness of these tools depends on the enabling environment which is the set of conditions that impact the capacity of citizens, government officials, civil society organizations (CSOs), the media and other actors to engage in social accountability in a sustained and effective manner at the policy, project and program level. This includes the legal, regulatory and policy frameworks and political/governmental, economic and socio-cultural factors.

The emerging need for a Sac curriculum is driven by a combination of forces. One, the demand for inclusive growth and development; two, the promising results of outcome based budgeting and other Sac tools in practice; three, rising demands and expectations of the people from governments; and four, the priority being given to governance in the World Bank Governance and Anti-Corruption Strategy.

Curriculum development, it was felt, would also give an impetus to Sac initiatives. Currently, there is a big gap in application of Sac methodologies, and of training programs that could ideally lead to the application, and improvement of Sac practices and tools.

Social Auditing in Andhra Pradesh

That social accountability is a developmental paradigm was clearly enunciated by the presentation on ‘What does Social Accountability Mean from the Perspective of the State – the Experience of Andhra Pradesh’, by Mr. K. Raju, Principal Secretary, Panchayati Raj and Rural Development Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh. The presentation proved to be extremely enlightening from three aspects: the key

prerequisites of a community social audit program, actual lessons from the ground; and the challenges that lay ahead.

Clearly, as Mr Raju acknowledged, government can take social accountability measures to scale provided it has the will, commitment and understanding. The Andhra Pradesh State Government has attempted to institutionalize social accountability mechanisms in the implementation of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme by adopting a three-pronged approach: Voluntary disclosure of information under RTI; tracking expenditure on every work and payment received by each household; and social audits.

Social audits have been conducted in over 24,000 habitations over a period of 18 months. The exercise employs village-level social auditors - rural youth - who have been specially trained for the purpose. The four-day auditing exercise culminates in the Gram Sabha (village meeting) where the findings are read out and answers are sought from the Panchayati Raj representatives and local government officials who are required to be present. Extensive use of communication technologies has been made use of to ensure transparency and accountability in operations. The entire information about the scheme is in the public domain and has been made available at www.nrega.ap.gov.in. There is a dedicated staff, specially trained and motivated. Regular capacity building is undertaken. Social audits are being used to improve implementation and delivery of benefits. To realise this, the social audit system was developed, budget duly allocated and over 20,000 personnel trained. The results have been highly satisfactory and now the AP state legislature is due to pass social auditing rules across all programs.

A key point that emerged in the discussion that followed Mr Raju's presentation was that Sac cannot move forward without access to information. In the AP example, the details of each of the 7 million households who have been given job cards can be accessed on the website.

There were some concerns expressed that tools developed by the government may be biased. Mr Raju clarified that the AP social audit tool was developed by the Rajasthan-based MKSS – an activist NGO that was at the forefront of the Right to Information legislation in India. To prevent misuse, a system of checks and balances has also been developed.

The main issues in implementing a Sac program at scale identified by Mr. K. Raju were:

- Change management processes starting within government
- Institutionalization of social auditing
- Maintaining independence of Sac
- Human resources – capacity building of government staff as part of the change management process and of social auditors
- Follow up action to ensure legal action for corruption and leakages uncovered.

Participants felt there was need to identify entry points for social accountability across sectors and in other parts/regions as well. How do we get the government to partner with

CSOs? Apart from advocacy, it was felt that a curriculum for government functionaries would go a long way in sensitizing them to the need and imperatives of social accountability. As Mr Raju said, “making it happen seamlessly is the challenge.”

Defining the Overall Framework

Participants agreed that there was *demand for a Sac curriculum* from multiple sources, albeit not an explicitly articulated demand, and that the early training programs would serve to test this demand. There was need to expand the existing concepts of Sac to widen the demand base. Also, demand could be stimulated by making citizens more aware and through involving CSOs.

In India, for example, the Right to Information (RTI) Act has helped to release some of the pent-up demand and also provided a framework for access to information. How this information is used within the rights framework clearly reflects the need for Sac professionals.

Objectives of Sac Curriculum

There was considerable discussion on the *objectives of the Sac curriculum*. Participants agreed that there was urgent need for capacity building with regard to social accountability skills in all countries of the sub-continent, and that India has many lessons to share with her neighbours. The prime objectives were identified as:

- Improving the quality of governance
- Building of social capital

In addition, the proposed curriculum would aim at:

- Sensitization (including creating awareness of entitlements)
- Implementation (developing of tools and approaches)
- Institutionalization
- Empowerment

The objectives would vary according to the target group and country. It would also need to be sectoral-specific, context-specific, and generally inclusive in nature. Participants felt that methods of institutionalization should have moorings in the political context.

The Target Audience(s) for Sac Curriculum and Training Programs

The discussion naturally extended into the next question before the groups: Who are the *target groups of Sac curriculum*? The group discussions and subsequent plenary reflected the importance of the topic at hand. Many felt that politicians were a key target group as without political will the process becomes more difficult. Others conceded that politicians needed to be sensitized but the purpose of a Sac curriculum would be better served by focusing on:

- Public officials (at local, state and national levels)

- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)/ practitioners
- Master trainers within training institutions

Some suggested that target groups could be divided into direct/primary and indirect/secondary groups. Community leaders and media were cited as examples of the latter.

Core Content topics for Sac Literacy

The *core content topics* agreed upon by the participants were:

1. Conceptual understanding (rationale, principles, definitions)
2. Enabling environment (situational diagnostics, legal framework, political economy, system of governance, planning mechanisms, existing accountability mechanisms, access to information, rights)
3. Sac mechanisms and tools (best practices, development of new tools, RTI Acts, participatory budgeting, performance monitoring, participatory policy making, documentation of processes, ICT, procurement, etc)
4. Strategic communication and advocacy
5. Sustainability (financial, institutional fund raising, scaling up)
6. Impact assessment / monitoring and evaluation

Defining Sac Curriculum for Specific Target Audiences

As the first day's discussion had concluded, every target group would have specific requirements, so the participants were divided into groups as follows:

- Defining Sac curriculum for State/Local Government Officials
 - Defining Sac curriculum for Academic Institutions
 - Defining Sac curriculum for Civil Society Organizations
 - Defining Sac curriculum for National level Government Officials
- The suggestions of each group have been fitted into a matrix so as to easily observe areas of convergence and divergence. **But the principle remained that while each of the 6 core content modules would be relevant for all, the degree and the depth of each module and the specificities of the topics within each content module would be tailored to each of the core audience groups.** There was also consensus on the need to ensure hands-on and field-based exposure as part of the training pedagogy for each of the target audiences.

Target Group	State/ Local Government Officials	Academic Institutions	Civil Society Organizations	National level Government Officials
Curriculum Content	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conceptual understanding (constitutional & legal framework, service rules, definition, principles, incentive structures, attitudinal change, sensitization) 2. Enabling environment (decentralization, legal knowledge & literacy, information analysis) 3. Sac mechanisms & tools (incl. best practices, and benchmarking) 4. Implementation & management of Sac tools 5. Strategic communication and advocacy (use of ICT, media, content development) 6. Sustainability (costing/ staffing, timing, partnership models, scaling up) 7. M&E / Impact assessment (outcome based processes, third party evaluation) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social accountability (concepts & different approaches) 2. Rights based approach to development 3. Administrative systems & governance (incl. local governance) 4. Civil society & development 5. Laws, programs and policies 6. State, CS, market 7. Autonomy & Regulation 8. Globalization (global institutions, corporates & Sac) 9. Sac in the context of gender and development 10. Sac methods & strategies / tools 11. M&E frameworks/impact assessment 	<p>Module 1</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CSO as agents of change 2. Concept of Sac (definition, forms, principle, rationale) 3. Enabling environment (situational analysis) 4. Existing Sac mechanisms within legal framework / rules 5. Citizen's Charter 6. Understanding of key institutions of governance 7. Transparency & pro-active disclosure of information within CSOs (also accreditation) <p>Module 2</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Sac tools (description, planning, application) <p>Module 3</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Communication & advocacy skills 10. Organizational planning (identify entry points) 11. M&E / Impact assessment 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conceptual understanding (of governance, accountability as a right, definition and principles of social accountability) 2. Enabling environment (study of de jure and de facto environment, situational diagnostics, identifying key indicators like leadership, media, etc) 3. Sac mechanisms & tools (rationale, tools-concept, implementation and innovations, examples relevant to target group) 4. Communication strategy & advocacy (external and internal strategies, identifying stakeholders and communicating incentives— political, institutional or financial, personal) 5. Sac skills & competencies (learning from people, gender sensitivity, change management, negotiation, conflict resolution, ICT, appraisals, understanding of numbers, presentation skills, team building) 6. Sustainability (budgeting, identifying key factors in success/failure, building policy and institutional frameworks) 7. Impact assessment (understanding M&E frameworks, defining inputs & outputs, indicators, qualitative assessments, documentation & dissemination, follow up & follow through)

Training duration/ Teaching methods	Standalone / modular courses (3-5 days) Case studies Field work	PG Diploma (1 month – 1 year) Lectures Case Studies Group/Panel Discussions Field work Exercises on tools	Modules (1 week each) Lectures/Discussions Brainstorm Case Studies Field visits Role play Term Papers/ assignments/ presentation/report Certification	-- Principles of adult learning (experiential, problem solving) Case Studies Field Work Materials- toolkits, manuals, check lists Continuous feedback Access to resource materials Reflections & wrap up after each module
Sustainability	Use of existing budgets Develop partnership models	Creating demand & awareness Initial requirement for donor support	Advocacy with govt. for financing Building Sac components into funded programs Training of trainers Partnerships with community organisations/ govt.	Ensuring budgetary allocation for Sac within program/scheme of govt./ PSUs/ public utilities
Maintenance of Quality	Review curriculum periodically A review panel may be constituted.	Refreshers courses for faculty Adequate availability of resource material Tracking of graduates Vigorous evaluation Peer review Accreditation	External panel review & certification Peer review Regular refresher courses for trainers Building a community of practitioners Strategic alliances / regular interaction & networking	Evolve quality guidelines Independent evaluation Accreditation through regional institutions Peer review

Next Steps

The concluding discussion only confirmed the passion and enthusiasm among the participants with regard to social accountability. Six key next steps emerged from the discussion.

1. Development of a common website accessible by all on materials and content already available under each of the 6 key content themes

Each participating institution that has materials to share should please send them to Karen Sirker (Washington DC) or Mohini Malhotra (Delhi) by mail or email. This can include articles, case studies and other materials that could be part of curriculum under each of the 6 main content themes. *Please send us your materials by Feb 28, 2008.* This will be an on-going process but we aim to have the first collection up soon.

The WBI will take the lead in organizing Sac materials and ensuring that it is in the public domain through an interactive website. It was suggested that the existing Development Gateway or SASARNET could be utilized for the purpose. An appropriate reading list/compendium will be part of the materials on the website

2. Development of materials where there are gaps

WBI in partnership with other organizations will develop new curriculum materials where gaps emerge if any from the above exercise.

3. Establishing a curriculum review panel

This panel's role will initially be to ensure quality of materials in the common website and a shared quality standard. This would be a small panel of Sac experts made up of academics, policy-makers and practitioners.

4. Create a roster of Sac faculty in the South Asia region for delivering an Sac curriculum. This would comprise both a core faculty group as well as extended faculty group.

5. In parallel, several training institutions had expressed that they would be introducing Sac already into existing programs. For example, the Hyderabad-based **Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI)** plans to incorporate three-hour modules on social accountability across all their management programs. **Asia Foundation**, Colombo, expressed their eagerness in partnering in this effort and was confident of getting the Sri Lankan Ministry of Local Government on board. The Colombo-based Institute for **Participatory Interaction in Development (IPID)** offered to conduct a pilot, to facilitate further development and implementation. The **Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)**, Maharashtra is launching a new post-graduate diploma programme in Human Development and Social Accountability for the 2008-09 academic year and is in

process of developing the core curriculum. **YASHADA** in Pune is planning to develop a program to be integrated across its main training programs. **KILA** in Kerala plans to get this jump-started by initially simply introducing a 20 minute introduction on Sac across all of its training programs. The **Lal Bahadur Shastri Training Academy** expressed interest in exploring a 2 to 3 day module targeted to senior civil servants. **BRAC University's Centre for Governance Studies** in Bangladesh plans to incorporate Sac into its Masters program aimed at the Bangladeshi civil service, and the **Aga Khan University** in Pakistan plans to incorporate Sac into its health training programs. WBI will follow-up with all interested partners to assess how best to support such initiatives.

6. Expansion of the Sac network to promote sharing and exchange of experiences and materials to keep the network and the curriculum updated and vibrant and in `real-time.' The appropriate venue and host will need to be explored. The workshop represented an encouraging beginning of a network towards developing an Sac curriculum that will need to be formalized to sustain it going forth.

All concurred that while curriculum development was essential and should materialize within a 12-month timeline; the effort should be not to lose out on any opportunities. Each should undertake a strategic analysis to identify entry points (like national budget, etc.) to position Sac initiatives.

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