

Vox Populi

voice of the people



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BOOK - POST

Dear Reader

This edition continues to take the social accountability agenda forward by highlighting different initiatives taking place across the world, particularly in Asia.

George Cheriyan provides his perspective on how social accountability is changing the face of governance today. The Wada Na Todo Abhiyan highlights the power of civil society to demand accountability by coming together and presenting a unified front. The CommGAP workshop brought different actors together to deliberate on how to increase the effectiveness of and demand for social accountability mechanisms. Then the innovative Social Weather Stations (SWS) Surveys on Corruption in Philippines provide a novel approach for exacting accountability from the governments of the day. Lastly, the definitive work of CYSD, a non-government NGO based in Bhubaneswar, Orissa in the area of participatory governance is also highlighted. Not to mention the usual features on SAC resources and SAC trivia.

We have received inputs from many institutions and we will continue to share them with you. Please share with us more details about your experiences, ideas and innovations on social accountability which we are sure will benefit others significantly.

Enjoy Reading!



SAC Article: Changing Face of Governance

– By George Cheriyan

The concept of governance has evolved to transcend the arena of the nation-state. Conventionally, governance encompasses the manner in which the state and its various institutions negotiate and mediate with people, markets and civil society, through laws, policies, regulation and finance. Today governance is overarching with many dimensions including institutional and political manifestations. Governance refers to decision-making and the process through which power is exercised to utilise economic and social resources for development. The concept of governance, over the last 15 years, has evolved to transcend the conventional arena of the nation-state or government. Market forces as well as civil-society processes and citizens' initiatives have increasingly started influencing the process of governance today. Many Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) strongly believe that governance is not just the effective management of economic resources.

Citizens have the right to demand accountability and public actors are obliged to be accountable to citizens. This is a fundamental principle of democracy and a keystone of a growing movement around the world that focuses on strengthening capacities within government and civil society to make public institutions more responsive to citizens. Traditionally, in a parliamentary system, political accountability of the executive is to the voters through elected assemblies. Administrative and legal accountability of the executive branch is exercised through administrative procedures and the court of law. But since decision-making and implementation is now to be shared with the interests of the private sector, it has become difficult to fix political responsibility.

Democratic governance underlines the spirit of a contract - that rulers and people were bound to each other by reciprocal obligations. In other words, it established the "basic bargain" between the government and its citizens that entails accountability of the government to the citizens in lieu of the authority vested in it by the citizens. The traditional paradigms of public administration and democratic accountability had to fit well together.

However, now a new approach has emerged in which the citizen actively engages in holding those in power accountable for their actions, decisions and behavior called - Social Accountability (SAC). Mechanisms of SAC can be initiated and supported by the state, citizens or both, but very often they are demand-driven and operate from the bottom-up. It refers to a broad range of actions and mechanisms that citizens, communities, civil society organisations and independent media can use to hold public servants and public and private service providers accountable. Traditionally, these have included protests, demonstrations, campaigns etc. In recent times, attempts have been made, particularly by CSOs; to apply Social Accountability Mechanisms in a systematic manner. Different instances of gradual, albeit grudging, acceptance of such mechanisms by the State and evidence of better public performance through the use of such mechanisms have lent credence to the need for greater use and institutionalisation of social accountability mechanisms within the governance process. Access to government-held information is a pre-condition to ensure accountability and in turn good governance. The plea here is not for piecemeal access to information, but for deliberately and systematically integrating information in the debate on fundamental public issues.

Lately, good governance is highlighted in political discourses in India. Reforms could help to come out of the morass of problems that our country faces, which includes bureaucratic inertia and inefficiency,



corruption, poor quality public services and delays in delivery of justice. There is a need for the state to encourage private capital initiatives, and build capabilities rather than redistribute wealth. Some states have adopted a stakeholder approach according to which the service providers, which provide public services, would be held responsible to their end users, or consumers, provided of course, the latter pay for the services. Social Accountability contributes to increased development effectiveness through improved public service delivery and better-informed policy design. The right to good governance is also considered as an essential part of the citizen's rights that one can expect from the government.

The above article was originally published by the author in Deccan Herald, 28th February 2008, Thursday, Bangalore Edition.

The writer is Associate Director of Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) International, Jaipur.

SAC Project: Wada Na Todo Abhiyaan – Holding Government Accountable to its Promise to End Poverty and Social Exclusion

Wada Na Todo Abhiyan is a national campaign to hold the government accountable to its promise to end Poverty, Social Exclusion & Discrimination. *Wada Na Todo Abhiyan* emerged from the consensus among human rights activists and social action groups who were part of the World Social Forum 2004 (Mumbai) on the need for a forceful, focused and concerted effort to make a difference to the fact that one-fourth of the world's poor live in India, and continue to experience intense deprivation from opportunities to learn, live and work in dignity.

The movement aims to monitor the promises made by the government to meet the objectives set in the UN Millennium Declaration (2000), the National Development Goals and the National Common Minimum Program (2004-09) with a special focus on the Right to Liveihood, Health & Education. The campaign focuses on mainstreaming concerns and aspirations of various social groups, especially *Dalits*, *Adivasis*, Nomadic Tribes, Women, Children, Youth and the Differently Abled are mainstreamed across programs, policies and development goals of the Central and State Governments.

On the occasion of Anti Poverty Day on 17th Oct 2007, the campaign ensured participation of the masses through the *gram sabhas* (Village Meetings) and students gatherings at various locations in Maharashtra. *Gram Sabhas* were held in 1027 locations with a total of 1,10,200 participants in 15 districts of the State.

Since its inception in 2004, the Abhiyan has mobilized more than 5,00,000 people to take action on our goal of Governance Accountability. *Wada Na Todo Abhiyan* has been able to bring together more than 3000 rights action groups across 23 states of India through its activities and initiatives. The focus of its efforts is on social action, policy audits and advocacy. Some of the key initiatives of the campaign include:

- Public awareness and action on the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act(NREGA), National Rural Health Mission(NRHM) and the Right to Education Bill
- "Nine Is Mine" campaign for the allocation of 9% of the GDP to Health and Education, as promised in the National Common Minimum Program
- Civil Society Reviews of the National Common Minimum Program, May 2007
- Release of the Citizen's Reports on the Millennium Development Goals, Dec 2006
- Advocacy with Legislators on key issues of Livelihood, Health & Education
- People's Summit Against Poverty (PSAP)

As part of *Wada Na Todo Abhiyan* many Civil Society Organisations in several states have formed decentralized networks that focus on the key areas of intervention of the campaign, and are able to develop local advocacy agenda and priorities around the campaign themes. The formation of state networks has also enabled co-ordinated action across

states, thereby increasing the visibility, outreach and impact of the Abhiyan at both states and national levels. Currently the state campaigns of the Abhiyan are operational in 14 states.

Source: <http://www.wadanatodo.net/default.asp>



SAc Event: Workshop in Paris on Generating Genuine Demand with SAc Mechanisms

CommGAP (Communication for Governance Accountability Programme) held a workshop on November 1-2, exploring how to increase the effectiveness of and demand for social accountability mechanisms. The event, held at the World Bank office in Paris, gathered around 25 representatives from academia, civil society, governments and development organizations from various countries.

The discussion covered a wide variety of topics, but returned repeatedly to the importance of: understanding and working within the realities of the given political system; treating access to information as a basic right; and strengthening and broadening the use of social accountability mechanisms without suppressing local creativity, which is already fueling such efforts worldwide.

Some of the key suggestions made in the workshop include:

1. Political systems can be navigated towards accountability, but there is no silver bullet for doing it. One must look for solutions within the specific context.”
2. Those developing accountability mechanisms should not see governments “enemies” but should rather engage them and demonstrate the usefulness of these tools for them as well.
3. Information access is a pre-requisite for demanding accountability from governments. Having freedom of information laws is not sufficient but a “rights-based” approach is necessary and access to information should be considered a basic right of the people, rather than just a legal obligation of the government.
4. Formalizing and institutionalizing social accountability mechanisms is important to make them sustainable.
5. Simply providing mechanisms for social accountability is not enough but citizens must be transformed and empowered enough to seek information and to be able to use it effectively.

The discussion led to the question-much debated but never fully answered: “Do people (such as civil society leaders, donors, etc.) who are trying to encourage demand for social accountability mechanisms have to wait for significant problems to come to light and cause upset, or rather should they support and help develop a culture of demand for accountability so that the people themselves can unearth and understand the source of the problems? Some said that the tangible problems, with poor public service, for example, had to arise first, before people would demand accountability. Others said that, unless people first had enough basic information, were aware of their rights as citizens, and felt the environment was safe, they would not even begin to consider that they could demand accountability from anyone.

Source: <http://web.worldbank.org>

SAc Results and Reports: Social Weather Stations (SWS) Surveys on Corruption – Philippines

Since 2000, Social Weather Stations has undertaken five Surveys of Enterprises on Corruption, funded by The Asia Foundation from resources provided by the United States Agency for International Development (US-AID) within the Transparent Accountable Governance project.

These surveys cover statistically representative samples of Filipino managers of enterprises initially in the National Capital Region (NCR) and later in other select urban areas of Philippines on whether they have to bribe the officials to get their work done in government offices/



agencies. The survey included face to face interviews. The sample covered business enterprises where two-thirds of the sample was allotted to small and medium enterprises, and one-third to large enterprises. The results for the questions were asked under the SWS survey are given in the table below.

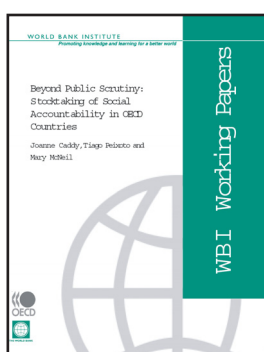
Type of Work	2000 (NCR)	2001 (NCR)	2002/03 (NCR)	2003/04 (NCR/Cebu & Davao Cities)	2005 (All areas)
	(Percentage of Respondents who paid Bribes)				
Local Government Permits or Licenses	55	54	50	41	36
Payment of Income Taxes	52	50	43	39	30
National Government Permits or Licenses	42	34	37	28	28
Compliance with Regulations on Importation	17	10	18	13	21
Collecting Receivables from Government	9	8	13	11	18
Supplying Government with Goods or Services	15	14	18	15	16
Availment of Government Incentives	6	4	10	4	10
None of the Above	21	20	26	30	39
Don't know/Refused	-	-	2	2	-

Note: None of the above, Don't Know and Refused were Volunteered Responses
Source: The SWS Surveys of Enterprises on Corruption

Over five years from 2000 to 2005 SWS survey results show a visible downfall in the number of government officials taking bribes for a number of works. However a visible exception to this trend is seen where people are started paying more bribes than earlier for Collecting Receivables from Government. There is also not much variance in bribing officials for Supplying Government with Goods or Services and Availment of Government Incentives have not reduced.

Source: <http://www.tag.org.ph/survey/default.htm>

SAC Resources



Beyond Public Scrutiny: Stocktaking of Social Accountability in OECD Countries

Joanne Caddy, Tiego Piexoto and Mary McNeil- 2007

Stock Number: 37265

194 Pages

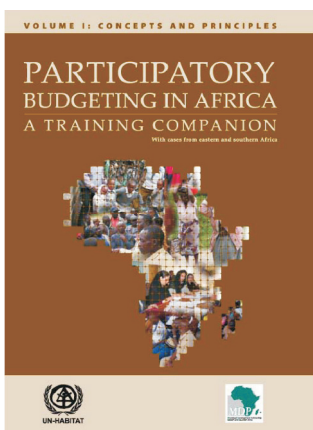
WBI Working Papers

World Bank Institute

This joint OECD-World Bank stocktaking exercise of social accountability (SA) initiatives in OECD member countries contributes to the global exchange of policy relevant knowledge. The stocktaking exercise produced 40 templates detailing social accountability initiatives in 27 OECD countries and the European Commission. Cases were selected on the basis of their focus and level, and potential transferability of their policy lessons.

Source: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/43/3/38983242.pdf>





Participatory Budgeting in Africa: A Training Companion

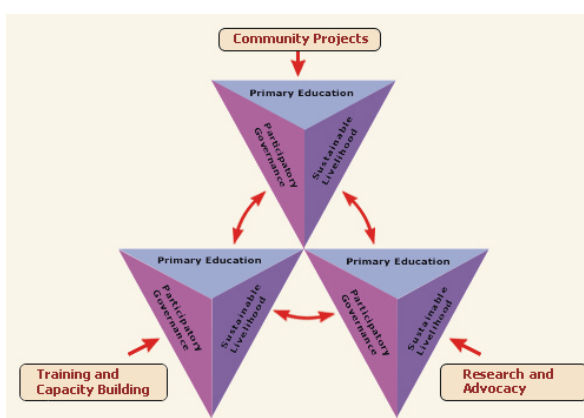
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In Africa, participatory budgeting is rapidly gaining attention from governments, civil society, and international development agencies as an innovative platform for strengthening citizens' voice in budgetary processes and in the delivery of public goods and services. In response to increasing requests from African cities, UN-HABITAT, in partnership with Environnement et Développement du Tiers- Monde ENDA-Ecopop (Senegal), the Municipal Development Partnership for Eastern and Southern Africa (Zimbabwe), and El Centro Internacional de Gestión Urbana (Ecuador), is working toward building the capacity of local governments in Africa for the introduction and application of participatory budgeting. This Training Companion is one of the results of this interregional collaboration. It is based on concepts and illustrative examples from African cities that recently initiated participatory budgeting. The Companion is published in English and French, later for French-speaking Africa. The Companion provides visibility and resonance to the efforts that have been made by many anonymous women and men of Latin America to improve democracy and construct participatory governance in their own cities.

Source: <http://www.unhabitat.org/pmss/getPage.asp?page=bookView&book=2460>

SAC Institution: CYSD – Sowing the Seeds of Change

CYSD is a non-profit NGO established in 1982 working for the development of deprived and marginalized people in the remotest areas of Orissa, one of the most backward states of India. CYSD's works in three mutually reinforcing and complementary thematic areas (**Figure – Strategic Model of CYSD**); Primary Education, Sustainable Livelihood and Participatory Governance. Participatory Governance being one of its most prominent domains, CYSD is working towards strengthening civil society and encouraging their participation. Some key activities of CYSD in participatory governance are given in the table below.



Activities of CYSD under Participatory Governance	
Participation in Local Self-Governance Capacity Building	<p>Efforts are directed towards enhancing people's abilities to analyse local development issues and place their legitimate demands, creating pressure to bring about pro-poor initiatives and organise Gram Sangathans (GS) etc.</p> <p>This activity aims at training to develop the capacities of community-based organisations by enhancing their managerial, technical and financial management skills. These programmes are followed up by initiatives to increase communities' own funds and enhance the confidence of Gram Sanghatans to present their demands at Gram Sabhas.</p>
Promotion of Micro-Planning	<p>Emphasis on micro planning is to encourage bottom up planning that enables communities to come together and analyse the economic, cultural and environmental situations of their villages, identify village resources for their optimum utilisation, prioritise problems and seek solutions.</p>
Support to PRIs	<p>Orientation to PRI's on their roles and responsibilities, schemes, programmes etc., is attached a lot of importance. Exclusive training on leadership and assertiveness skills is given to women representatives to overcome issues such as proxy leadership.</p>
Panchayat Resource Centres (PRCs)	<p>These centres seek to disseminate information among citizens and thereby enable them to make informed choices and decisions or ask questions to enhance accountability. PRCs take up development issues like education, sanitation, health, and facilitate the participation of people in the planning and implementation of various poverty alleviation and employment assurance schemes.</p>
Promotion of People-Centric Advocacy	<p>Identifying and addressing issues of injustice, marginalization, abuse of rights etc., are some of the activities taken up. To ensure governance and accountability, educating people on the RTI Act, programmes and schemes etc., are also taken up by distributing IEC materials in the form of brochures, leaflets and posters etc.</p>

Source: <http://www.cysd.org/home.php>

SAC Trivia – Did you know?

1. Common Cause a nonprofit advocacy organization located in Washington DC, USA, provides for citizens to voice their opinions on political processes through online petitions and to hold their elected leaders accountable. Common Cause now has more than 400,000 members and supporters and 36 state organizations in America.
2. After the introduction of participatory budgeting, Porto Alegre has been nominated as the Brazilian city with the 'best quality in life' for four consecutive times.
3. THE Kerala State Poverty Eradication Mission, Kudumbashree, has set up an employment Web site. Called Keralashree (www.keralashree.org) , the site is intended to serve as a link between members of the Kudumbashree network and potential recruiters.



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4. The TII-CMS India Corruption Study shows that below poverty line households paid more than 8830 million rupees to avail basic services like Public distribution systems, hospitals, school education, electricity and water supply.

About SASANET

South Asia Social Accountability Network (SasaNet) is an initiative taken by the Centre for Good Governance (CGG) and the South Asia Sustainable Development (SASSD) Division of the World Bank to develop a broader understanding amongst various Government and Civil Society Organization towards the potential use of SAC tools in promoting good governance. The network offers a platform for mutual cooperation, exchange of experiences among organizations, associations and informal groups. The SasaNet website is the electronic voice of the South Asia Social Accountability Network. It offers a comprehensive knowledge base which includes conceptual information, set of tools, best practices and case studies for facilitating enhanced social accountability in governance.

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