

Vox Populi

voice of the people



Volume I

Issue I

March 2008

A Sasanet Monthly

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Dear Reader

Greetings from the SASANET Team!

We are pleased to announce the relaunch of the Sasanet Newsletter after a hiatus of nearly one year. While we will make every effort to bring to you information on the latest projects/pilots, studies, reviews and trends from the world of social accountability & empowerment, we also seek your valuable contributions to the newsletter highlighting social accountability projects, practices, experiences & general information.

The format for the newsletter has been modified to make it more structured and informative. Each issue would contain:

- SAC Article: An academic or research article/abstract on social accountability or a theme thereof
- SAC Project: Highlights from an ongoing social accountability project or pilot study
- SAC Event: The synopsis of a workshop, conference, seminar or training programme on social accountability
- SAC Results & Reports: Key results or findings from a SAC study or project
- SAC Resources: Book reviews and online sources of information on social accountability
- SAC Institution: A brief write-up on an institution or organisation working to further the SAC agenda
- SAC Trivia: Interesting information & anecdotes on civic empowerment & citizen power.

We hope that this newsletter will facilitate sharing of ideas and experience and in the process stimulate intellectual debate on social accountability and governance.

BOOK - POST



SAC Article: Participatory Approach to RTI – A Case of Jagruk Nagrik Manch (JNM) - A.K. Ojha

Passing of the RTI Act in 2005 was a step towards making the polity inclusive in developmental efforts proclaiming transparency and allowing citizens' access to information. Enactment of such a comprehensive legislation however did not yield the expected results which was not encouraging for the Right to Information Regime. Demands to have access to information were resisted by almost all departmental authorities and the act was seen as interference in their secret domain. Volunteers of NGOs like MKSS, Rajasthan were denied copies of muster-rolls on the grounds that these were 'secret documents'. MKSS was forced to keep 'dharna' in different offices. Workers of *Parivartan*, a Delhi based NGO, were also beaten up for demanding information of ration supplied to the residents of particular wards. Similar is the story of *Jagruk Nagrik Manch (JNM)* Nokha, Bikaner. Their volunteers were threatened for demanding copies of vouchers, muster-rolls, ration supply registers etc. They had to struggle for six months to get information on the work records of Kakku Gram Panchayat and were only able to secure it after the Chief Secretary, Government of Rajasthan intervened.

Such examples, where information is still denied to the community, are a dime a dozen. It is clear that the secrecy regime creates a nexus between officials and the executing agencies who work or exploit or loot the benefits silently within in the four walls of secrecy of officialdom. Hence a new and a valid axis between officials and citizens is to be drawn so as to improve the delivery and outcomes. The civil society particularly NGO's, media and above all the aware and empowered citizenry can do a lot in this direction. Jagruk Nagrik Manch's is a story of empowering citizens and equipping them with a powerful tool of information thus helping reduce corruption and making the governance inclusive and transparent.

Success Story 1: Bungling by Bhadla Sarpanch

Sarpanch Bhadla drew and misappropriated an amount of Rs. 17,500 which was to be paid to Smt. Pani Devi by forging her thumb impression under the Indira Awas Yojna Housing Scheme. JNM members Chandra and Bhagirath got the copies of record issued and with their help Smt. Pani Devi came to know about the bungling. They built pressure on the Sarpanch and he promised to pay back the amount along with interest to Smt. Pani Devi the total of which came to around Rs. 46,000. The Sarpanch paid Rs. 30,000 to Smt. Pani Devi and refused to pay the balance. Smt. Pani Devi, who had by now gathered sufficient strength, approached the court. The Sarpanch could not get a bail from the lower court.

Information Centre

JNM is an outfit of Urmul Jyoti Sansthan (UJS) a sister organisation of the URMUL TRUST. Ever since its inception UJS has been working for people's right to know the details of development works and schemes under the banner of Jagruk Nagrik Sangh, a group of 10-15 members that got itself formally structured as Jagruk Nagrik Manch (JNM) in 1999. The Manch carries out its activities from its Soochna Kendra (Information Centre). Information made available in the centre includes number of BPL persons in villages, PDS - list of dealers, various government schemes, their estimates and sanctions, copies of FIRs relating to important disputes, list of gramsevaks, patwaris, sarpanchas, upsarpanchas, panchas, citizen's charters of 15 important departments etc. The centre also help collect specific information required by the member and also publishes a quarterly magazine named Gram Jyoti for dissemination of information. The centre also encourages the citizens to file RTI applications. In case a public authority does not respond it tracks the application and acts proactively and investigates the matter with their personal involvement.

Members, Training and Meetings

JNM has some 500 members spread in around 80 villages. The membership is restricted to those who are devoted to the cause of RTI and process development and have aptitude for social issues, regularity, motivation and possess transparent character. The members are trained by the Manch to work with the community. Further the Manch organises regular bi-monthly member meetings to discuss various issues and clarify the doubts of the



members. Such meetings upkeep the inspiration level of its members and keep their interest alive and also prepares them to combat corruption through acquiring more information and participating in development activities.

Strategy

The Manch adopts two-pronged strategy for working amongst villagers viz:

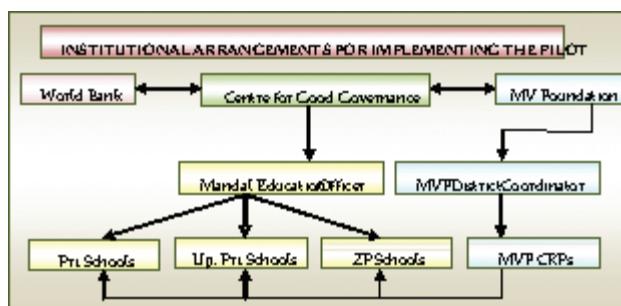
1. Reaching the villagers with copies of vouchers, bills, sanction letters, expenditure statements, measurement books etc of related works in their villages under different schemes. This way people come to know about the works, their expenditure and quality. Their reactions are important and their suggestions help agencies improve the quality of works. This way the works in the villages do not remain activities of isolation but attract larger participation.
2. Organise jan-sunvais (public hearings) at panchayat level to discuss budget of panchayats, expenditure by the panchayats, Public Distribution System etc. Irregularities in works are exposed in jan-sunvais encouraging possible corrections in the process and systems and making them accountable for public money.

The JNM workers seem deeply involved in the campaign of RTI, their success lies in the fact that along with their movement they have educated the people and taken them together. The strength of JNM lies in their relationship with people. Through the use of RTI they have tried to mainstream the suppressed and the backwards and change the feudal attitude of forwards and bureaucracy and even that of elected functionaries. JNM has raised the expectations of people and now hopefully they would not compromise and accept the lower level of outcomes. Their awareness and participation through the RTI would enable them to attain higher goals and to keep the interest alive.

The writer is a Visiting Professor at the Centre for Good Governance, HCM Rajasthan State Institute of Public Administration, Jaipur.

SAC Pilot Project in Andhra Pradesh: Social Accountability in School Education

Centre for Good Governance (CGG) along with South Asia Sustainable Development (SASSD) Group of the World Bank, organised a workshop for promotion of social accountability mechanisms in South Asia. The workshop exposed the participants to the pilot projects on different social accountability tools. As part of this initiative, CGG is piloting community score cards project in Andhra Pradesh. The primary objective of the project is to pilot community score cards in the school education context and develop performance score card methodology in a participative manner. The project is being piloted in Nalgonda and Adilabad Districts of Andhra Pradesh.



Some key findings of the first round of community score cards that was implemented between October 2007 and January 2008 are given in the box below.

Key Issues raised by the Community Members

1. Basis amenities like classrooms, drinking water and toilet facilities, furniture are insufficient
2. Facilities and drive for organizing extra-curricular and co-curricular activities is absent
3. Efforts for improving quality of education through library, science lab, TV, computers Radio etc., is totally absent. Subjects like English and Physical Education are also not taught
4. Tracking the progress of the children through report cards, quality learning material and feedback from parents is minimal
5. Administrative issues like teachers' regularity, pupil attendance registers, quality and sufficient number of teachers in schools, utilizing grants, tackling dropouts, fees related issues are all neglected
6. Scheme related activities & health related issues are also in bad shape

Key Issues raised by the Service Providers

1. Administrative issues like availability of teachers, *vidya* volunteers, support staff (sweepers, attenders etc) are affecting the service delivery in a number of areas like implementation of midday meals programme, maintaining cleanliness, planning and utilisation of funds etc.
2. Due to poor performance of children, absenteeism, dropouts etc., the service providers are unable to bring out quality results.
3. Facilities like teaching learning material, library, science labs, etc., are needed to improve the quality of education. Proper classrooms, drinking water, toilets, playground, electricity can also improve the functioning of the schools.
4. Comprehensive development of the wards is only possible when funds for co-curricular and extra-curricular activities are provided.

After the first round of the Community Score Card exercise in the pilot mandals, some interesting developments have taken place in some of the schools. An example of the Zilla Parishad High School (ZPHS) in Eatoor in Tirumalgiri Mandal, Nalgonda District is given below.

Situation before the CSC pilot

1. The school building was in a dilapidated condition.
2. Lack of drinking water and other infrastructure in the school.
3. The school had an L shaped compound wall without an entrance gate.
4. There was no drinking water provision within the premises.
5. As per the CLAP (Child Learning Assessment Programme) of the Department of School Education, the high school at Eatoor was rated D – grade.

Situation after the CSC Pilot

1.	Drinking Water	Intensive consultations with the community encouraged the local ladies club who sponsored the construction of a water tank for the school
2.	Furniture	Consultations with community members helped in securing 22 iron benches for the school which were donated by the community
3.	Gate	Entrance gate was built as part of infrastructure improvement initiative by the community
4.	Quality of Education	In the Action Plan, prepared in the month of October'07, the community decided to improve the grade of the school from "D" to "C" by December'07 and to B by March'08. By 2008, January the school has achieved "C" grade
5.	Extra-curricular	Another person from the community donated 20 pairs of sports dresses to the school children
6.	Support Staff	During community consultations one of the community members came forward to contribute Rs.250/- per month to the school towards engaging a sweeper, as a result the school has engaged a sweeper and the general hygienic conditions in the school have improved



SAC Pilot Project in Rajasthan: Combating Corruption in Rajasthan with the help of RTI as a Tool

CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS-CART), Jaipur in partnership with Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF), a Washington DC, USA based NGO, is implementing a project titled 'Combating Corruption in Rajasthan by applying RTI Act as a Tool' from March 2007. The project is being implemented in two administrative districts of Rajasthan viz., Bhilwara and Tonk with a rural community based approach. Its overall objective of the project is to create awareness and encourage common citizens to use the RTI Act. It also aims at empowering CSOs and vulnerable sections at the grassroots to help improve functioning of the existing accountability mechanisms; and advocate with the policy makers for effective implementation of RTI Act.

By the end of the project it is expected that, a vibrant informal structure in the form of Consortium Group for Combating Corruption' (CGCC) will be in place in Ajmer and Jaipur divisional head quarters of the state. These CGCC will be empowered with resources in terms of knowledge, information, active support from functional network of CSOs/CBOs, constant cooperation from the vigilant citizens, support from the proactive and committed government officials and access to corruption defeating agencies/mechanism. The CGCC will be able to support corruption-combating attempts by citizens especially the poor rural. It has also assigned targets to file RTI applications to discourage corruption among government officials.

In a day long Final Dissemination Meeting that was convened with an aim to disseminate the outcomes of the project, primarily the results achieved by filing RTI applications. The aim was to make collective recommendations to the governments at national and sub-national level to curb corruption in the governance and public life. Some of the key comments made in the dissemination meeting are as follows.

Appreciation	Critique	Recommendation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project is unique in terms of taking forward the recommendations of the RTI National Convention that was held in N. Delhi, October 13-15, 2006. A great change was noticed since the projects inception in the last one year. The local bodies i.e. municipalities/corporations, panchayats etc., are the most important bodies where maximum number of RTI applications were filed. Though imposition of penalty was low, a tremendous level of awareness and preparedness was seen among erring officials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The unnecessary filing requesting irreverent information deprives the needy citizens. Since, records management is poor in government departments, information is not readily available and citizens will have to face problems at least for the next 2-3 years. Requisite fee deposit mechanism under the Act should be further simplified. The delay in providing information is also major cause of corruption thus government should take immediate measures to avoid the situation. The mindset of government officials is yet to change only then will there be a free disclosure of information 	<p>Imparting training to government functionaries on RTI is most essential.</p> <p>There should be proper documentation of cases and results of the applications that were filed under RTI Act, for wider dissemination.</p> <p>In addition to requests for information the CSOs should simultaneously come forward to help the governments in accomplishing "proactive disclosure" under the Act.</p> <p>The project should be replicated in remaining five divisions of the State (Rajasthan) and if possible scale it up to other states of the country.</p> <p>Learning from the project should be given a shape of a comprehensive training module</p>



SAC Event – Exposure Visit on Citizens Charters for CESSD Project Officials, Government of Pakistan



The Government of Pakistan has taken up a service delivery improvement project entitled, “Communications for Effective Service Delivery Improvement Project” (CESSD) in four districts of North West Frontier Province, i.e.; Abbottabad, Nowshera, Peshawar and Swat to improve water, education and health services to citizens by the local governments in partnership with the civil society. Through this initiative, for the first time in NWFP, Local

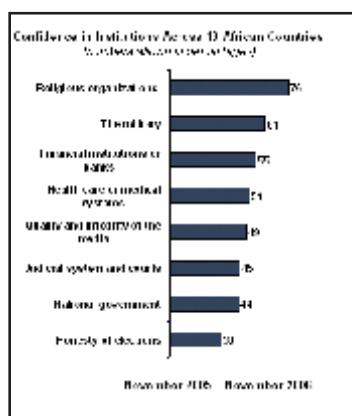
Governments are displaying Public Information Boards, District and Tehsil Council budget sessions are being televised and shown on local cable networks. The Local Governments have also begun to develop Citizens’ Charters as a tool for improving services, a collaborative venture between CESSD and the Water and Sanitation Programme - South Asia (WSP-SA).

In this connection an exposure visit and training was planned for CESSD staff at Centre for Good Governance starting from Nov 1st-Nov 4th 2007. The participants were exposed to the methodology on developing, formulating and implementing a Citizen’s Charters. As a part of the practical experience on implementing the charters the participants interacted with experts and practitioners on the subject to understand in detail the various aspects of implementing Citizen’s Charters. The key lessons learnt include:

1. Complete government support (top leadership) to the implementation of charters
2. Training and capacity building of the staff is critical
3. Extensive consultations with key stakeholders are vital for implementing the charters
4. Accessibility of concerned officers in an organization for assistance is important
5. Developing Service Delivery Standards for effective implementation
6. Display of charters is another important concern
7. Internal review & monitoring gives required impetus to successful implementation of charters.
8. Feedback from end users in regular intervals is very useful for internal corrections
9. Awareness on citizen’s charters to the public is a key factor of successful implementation

The Centre for Good Governance, Hyderabad is a resource institution supporting the capacity building initiatives on Citizen’s Charters in India.

SAC Results & Reports-Africans’ Confidence in Social & Political Institutions - Gallup Poll



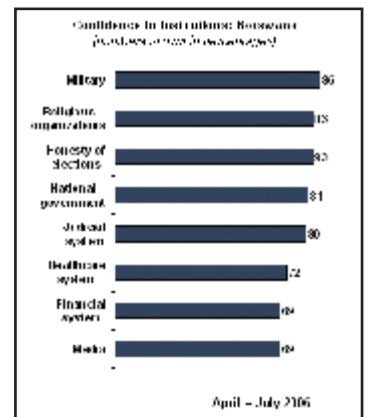
The Gallup World Poll gives you knowledge to develop strategies based on the current opinions and behaviors of the world’s 6 billion citizens. The Gallup World Poll continually surveys citizens in more than 140 countries, representing 95% of the world’s adult population. The following poll is reported by Bob Tortora, Regional Director of Gallup Poll for Sub-Saharan Africa. Randomly selected national samples of approximately 1,000 adults, aged 15 & older, who live in the 19 African nations were surveyed. Total sample is 19,002 individuals. For results based on these samples, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum error attributable to sampling and other random effects is ± 3 percentage points. The key findings of the poll are:



- Overall across the continent, the citizens were most likely to say they were confident in the religious organizations (76%) in their countries, followed by the military (61%), and financial institutions (55%).
- Africans were least likely to place confidence in the honesty of their country's elections (33%), and their national governments (44%).

One notable exception to this pattern is Botswana. Upon gaining independence Botswana established, what is now the longest-standing multi-party democracy in Sub-Saharan Africa. That stability is clearly reflected in the population's confidence in all the country's institutions, but particularly those associated with government and democracy.

- The country's national government, judicial system, and honesty of elections all elicit the confidence of at least 8 in 10 Botswana, compared to less than 50% of Africans across the 19 countries surveyed. Many of the benefits of government stability directly affect the day to day lives of Botswana's population.
- As in all of sub-Saharan Africa, malaria and AIDS are pervasive — but the country's well-developed healthcare system offers more hope than in most African nations. Universal free education has been another key achievement of the Botswana government; 73% of Botswana say they are satisfied with the country's schools, compared to 50% of Africans continent-wide.



Source: <http://www.ansa-africa.net>

SAC Resources – State Reform & Social Accountability



Edited by Peter Houtzager, Anuradha Joshi and Adrian Gurza Lavalle - 2008
 ISBN 0265 5012
 120 pages
 Price £14.95
 IDS Bulletins – Vol. 38 No 6

This IDS Bulletin focuses on the role of civil society actors in the design of sectoral reforms and the possibilities of social accountability resulting from this role. In addition to large institutional reforms in social assistance and health, the articles cover education reform in India as well. They are compiled from the first year fieldwork findings of the study called 'Modes of Service Delivery, Collective Action and Social Accountability in Brazil, India, and Mexico'.

Source: <http://www.ids.ac.uk>



Publisher: Centre for Media Studies (CMS)
 Research House, Community Centre, Saket, New Delhi-110 017
 Email: transparency@cmsindia.org & info@cmsindia.org
 Transparency review – Monthly Journal

Transparency Review is a journal published by CMS, Transparency Studies Wing which publicises news, articles and documentation concerning developments in RTI and overall interface between governance and society. Priority is given to right to education, work, justice etc., especially of children and associated human and social rights at the grassroots.

Source: www.cmsindia.org



SAC Institution – Affiliated Network for Social Accountability (ANSA-Africa)

ANSA-Africa is a new network, jointly created by the World Bank and the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) of South Africa, to become a leading African advocate of citizen involvement in demand-side governance initiatives. ANSA-Africa seeks to link African civil society and community groups across the continent as implementation partners, to support and implement initiatives. Partners in turn will forge their own regional and local associations to implement social accountability initiatives and expand cadres of knowledge. Through its network, ANSA-Africa works in three main ways:

- Support social accountability initiatives and programs by providing technical and leveraged financial assistance for the design, implementation and evaluation of quality social accountability initiatives. Through collaboration, the network transmits effective tools and incubates innovative new approaches.
- Promote Capacity development through training and skill building to encourage the use and adaptation of means for citizens to demand accountable governance, delivered through a regional approach to generate the greatest impact. ANSA, through its partners, will design and deliver training programmes across Africa.
- Undertake research and dissemination to apply creativity and rigor to assessing, refining and developing social accountability tools and innovative electronic means to promote wide access to knowledge.

Objectives of ANSA – Africa

Develop cross-country collaboration on SAC and demand-side governance initiatives;
Provide technical assistance to different countries so the quality of SAC initiatives is greatly enhanced; deliver training programs on specific tools and techniques; and
Share country experiences and lessons from SAC and demand-side governance initiatives regionally and globally

Technical support provided by the network focuses on design and use of social accountability techniques with the greatest potential for improving the efficiency, transparency and quality of public services.

Source: <http://www.ansa-africa.net>

Trivia – Did You Know?

1. In Andhra Pradesh, India, more than 10.1 million rupees from corrupt and erring officials was recovered voluntarily through Social Audits and Public Hearings. By March 2008 more than 30,000 social audits were conducted in around 25,000 habitations.
2. More than 8000 RTI applications were filed in a span of 5 days from 21st may to 25th May, 2006 in a Mass Awareness Campaign organised by United Forum for Right to Information (UFRTI) a consortium of more than 80 CSOs & NGOs in Andhra Pradesh, India.
3. Human Rights activists and social action groups have started a nation-wide campaign called the *Wada Na Todo Abhiyan*. It is a national campaign to hold the government accountable to its promise to end Poverty, Social Exclusion & Discrimination in the country. Since its inception in 2004, the (Campaign) has mobilized more than 500,000 people.

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.

(www.sasanet.org)

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