



# Vox Populi

*voice of the people*

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Dear Member,

Greetings!

It gives us great pleasure to present the first issue of our monthly Social Accountability (SAC) newsletter. This newsletter has been started with a view to collate and disseminate knowledge about Social Accountability mechanisms from different parts of India, South Asia and other parts of the world.

The newsletter will contain information on projects and workshops, research findings, articles, news features and general information on the subject of social accountability. We invite all members to contribute articles, news and any information on knowledge sharing events for publication.

We hope that this newsletter will serve as a medium for the exchange of ideas and stimulate intellectual debate on a subject that has a wide ranging impact on governance and development.

## An Introduction to the Concept of Social Accountability

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 organizations 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. Evidence suggests that social accountability mechanisms can contribute to improved governance, increased development effectiveness through better service delivery, and empowerment. While the range of social accountability mechanisms is wide and diverse, key common building blocks include obtaining, analyzing and disseminating information, mobilizing public support, and advocating and negotiating change. Critical factors of success include: access to and effective use of information, civil society and state capacities and synergy between the two. Ultimately, the effectiveness and sustainability of social accountability mechanisms is improved when they are institutionalized and when the state's own internal mechanisms of accountability are rendered more transparent and open to civic engagement. Social accountability mechanisms to be effective on the long run need to be institutionalized and linked to existing governance structures and service delivery systems.



## Social Accountability Mechanisms -Global Trends

Social Accountability mechanisms are now being increasingly applied in developing countries and have met with considerable success. For many years, knowledge and learning pertaining to social accountability stemmed from a handful of pioneering initiatives, such as those on participatory budgeting by the municipality of Porto Alegre, Brazil; on budget analysis by the Institute for Democracy in South Africa; and the report card on pro-poor services in the Philippines by the Department of Budget and Management. It is truly a world wide movement that has seen acceptance by governments around the world in furthering the goals of development.

That it is a worldwide movement can also be seen from protests, demonstrations and court actions to bring governments to be accountable to the citizens it serves. Governments differ in the way and in the extent to which they act for and protect their people. This raises the question of whom the government really serves and it also raises the question of how one can make people in responsible positions accountable to the community. It is through this background that the demand for social accountability grew in strength worldwide. If the government only acts to protect the community as a result of pressure from the community, then there have to be ways and means for creating such pressure, there have to be ways and means for people to have access to the mass-media and to the population as a whole. The facts have to become known.

In the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan and the Scandinavian countries there has been citizen led protests and struggle culminating in pressure towards more socially responsible behaviour. There were demonstrations for nuclear disarmament, there are consumers' associations and protests against nuclear power stations, against the irresponsible use of weedkillers and insecticides, against irresponsible marketing of drugs, protests about the national health service by patients and by the medical profession itself, about the siting of airports and property development as well as about environmental pollution and preservation of local countryside and amenities, by bodies such as parents associations, trade and professional unions and by self- help groups.

Social Accountability mechanisms are now being increasingly applied in developing countries. The Local Governance Development Fund Project in Sirajganj, Bangladesh, for example has taken the lead in setting up its own mechanisms to involve the public in promoting accountability. Joint state-civil society initiatives have also been undertaken, and many governments institutionalize innovations suggested by NGOs. The Indonesian Forum on Budget Transparency (Forum Indonesia untuk Transparansi Anggaran) used budget advocacy in support of public services at the provincial level to support poverty reduction. Action Aid Nepal has been examining the national budget partly because of the threat of cuts in social spending. In the Philippines, Kapitbisig Laban sa Kahirapan (Linking Arms against Poverty)—Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services (KALAHI-CIDSS) is the state's flagship antipoverty program. In India, The Public Record of Operations and Finance in Bangalore, focuses on financial reporting standards, which are essential to the effective functioning of democracy. Hence it pursues transparency in the government's financial operations through a collaborative process between the city's stakeholders and its municipal corporation. Nations such as Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, and the Philippines have mandated decentralization by law and have employed social accountability mechanisms to improve local governance. In Japan, citizens came together to push for, and succeeded in establishing, the Right to Information Act; in the Philippines, Social Weather Station fought with members of Congress and the judiciary for the right to publish survey information, and the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism specialized in digging up and publishing information on corruption; and in Bangladesh, Transparency International-Bangladesh compiled information about corruption cases and brought them to the public's attention.

Various tools are being used by organizations with the active support of the government. Some of these tools are Budget Analysis - scrutiny of budgets to ascertain the extent to which fiscal allocations truly reflected government commitments. This can be broken down further to National budget analysis (Action Aid



Nepal); State Budget Analysis (Tamil Nadu People's Forum for Social Development, India); Local Budget Analysis; Sectoral budget analysis (Developing Initiatives for Social and Human Action, Gujarat, India). Participatory budget expenditure tracking has also gained momentum and can be seen today in operation. Notable examples of these are Social Audit (Parivartan, New Delhi, India); Sectoral Expenditure Tracking (Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability, New Delhi, India); Community Expenditure Tracking (KALAHI-CIDSS, Philippines). Participatory Performance Monitoring mechanisms like Citizen report cards (Public Affairs Centre, Bangalore); Community Score Cards (Centre for Good Governance in Vishakapatnam, India) have been implemented with immense success.

The transition from the traditional form of top-down approach to governance has now moved to accommodate the world wide people's response to citizen centric governance and the gradual institutionalization of Social Accountability mechanisms in countries around the world. Impacts of such movements are being felt in parts of the world where such mechanisms are being used. Some of these outcomes bring social problems to the fore, empower people, inflame public opinion, contain corruption, change policy and law and raise cost effectiveness of public services.

## Summary of Pilot Projects

Six pilot projects in India and Sri Lanka were initiated through the "Capacity Building and Piloting of Social Accountability Initiatives for CDD in South Asia" Trust Fund Window and they have successfully demonstrated how various social accountability tools such as Public Expenditure Tracking Systems (PETS), Community Scorecards (CSCs) and Citizens' Report Cards (CRCs) can improve accountability through effective civic engagement. A brief summary of the pilot projects is attached below. The pilots have also resulted in the formation 6 sub-regional centers of excellence that are in a position to act as resource organizations and provide technical assistance.

### 1. *Adapting the Community Assessment Process in Various Contexts in Sri Lanka:*

- a. **Partners** – The Center for Good Governance, Hyderabad, the World Bank Institute and the Community Development and Livelihood Improvement Project (Gemidiriya)
- b. **SAC Tool used** – Community Scorecard (alternatively referred to as the Community Assessment Process)
- c. **Brief Description** – Two sub-pilots in two villages have been conducted to assess the performance of the Village Savings and Credit Organization (VSCO) and the Drinking Water Supply Sub-Project respectively. Community/user generated indicators have been identified and the quality and efficiency of service delivery has been measured through these indicators. A Project wide scale-up to assess other village level organizations and

small village infrastructure works and programs is likely in the near future.

### 2. *Assessing Healthcare Service Delivery in Andhra Pradesh, Using Community Scorecards:*

- a. **Partners** – The Center for Good Governance, (CGG) Hyderabad and the Andhra Pradesh Rural Poverty Reduction Project
- b. **Social Accountability (SAC) Tool used** – Community Scorecard
- c. **Brief Description** - An assessment of 2 Primary Health Centers in 12 villages in Vishakapatnam District has been conducted. The data and results from this pilot are being used to develop a sub-district model for health service delivery that can be replicated across other districts in Andhra Pradesh.

### 3. *Designing a Gram Panchayat Performance Monitoring and Rating System in Chattisgarh:*

- a. **Partners** – The Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) and the Chhattisgarh District Poverty Reduction Project (CGDPRP)
- b. **SAC Tool used** – Community Scorecard
- c. **Brief Description** – The performance of 30 Gram Panchayats (GPs) in 7 districts have been rated using Community Scorecards. The objective of the exercise is to develop a performance monitoring and rating system for assessment of Gram Panchayats through user feedback. The comparative assessment of GP performance will be used to identify and award high performing GPs. The system



is expected to be replicated across the 2046 GPs covered under the CGDPRP once it has been developed and tested.

#### 4. *Evaluating the Mid-Day Meal Scheme in Rajasthan:*

- a. **Organization** – The Consumer Unity and Trust Society, Jaipur, Rajasthan (CUTS)
- b. **SAC Tools used** – Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS) and Citizens Report Cards (CRCs)
- c. **Brief Description** – The performance of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme, a national program to provide supplementary nutrition to primary school children, in 211 schools in all 14 blocks of Chittorgarh District, Rajasthan was evaluated using PETS and CRCs. Feedback from a total of 422 teachers, 2210 students, 2210 parents and 211 cooks was gathered for this pilot. The State Government is deliberating over the findings from the pilot and is considering scaling up the exercise to cover all schools in the State.

#### 5. *Appraising Health, Education, Sanitation Social Welfare & Panchayat Services in Kerala:*

- a. **Organizations** – Kerala Institute of Local Administration, Thrissur (KILA), Public Affairs Foundation, Bangalore
- b. **SAC Tools used** – A combination of Community Scorecards and Citizens Report Cards

- c. **Brief Description** – To further develop the participatory planning process launched by the Government of Kerala, KILA has devised a citizen/user feedback mechanism to assess the quality and effectiveness of services provided in 5 areas namely - health, education, sanitation, social welfare and service from the panchayat office. The model has been tested successfully in four villages. The State Government has scaled up the exercise both geographically and sectorally to all local bodies in the State. .

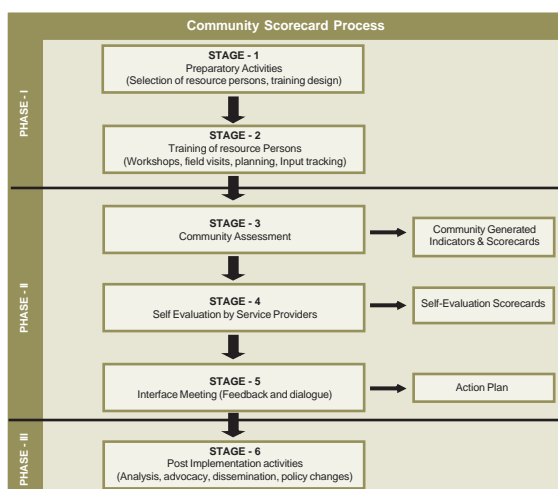
#### 6. *Assessing Health, Education, Water Supply and Panchayat Services in Maharashtra:*

- a. **Organization** – The Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, Maharashtra (TISS), Jalswarajya Project
- b. **SAC Tool used** – Community Scorecard

**Brief Description** – 5 different service delivery contexts were assessed in 14 villages in Satara District of Maharashtra using Community Scorecards. TISS will use the learning from this pilot to develop training modules on social accountability that will be incorporated in the academic curriculum of TISS and other Colleges of Social Work, used for training local government functionaries, NGOS, CSOs, etc.

## Pilot Project in AP - Assessment of Primary Healthcare Services in Vishakapatnam using Community Scorecards

Mangamma is a 26 year old married young lady living in Devarapalle Mandal of Vishakapatnam district in the South Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. Like several people in her community in this remote Mandal in the state, she is dependent on the Primary Health Centre (PHC) for her medical needs. 'Alls not well', she says, characteristically of her experiences with the PHC services. She laments that the service is poor because the doctors worked on their terms and were oblivious to the needs of this poor community that depends on the PHC for medical aid. Several of them don't turn up to carry out their duties; there was shortage of medicine and the infrastructure was inadequate. The Center of Good Governance, Hyderabad, in partnership with the World Bank sponsored Andhra Pradesh Rural Poverty Reduction



Project, undertook a pilot project in which the Community Scorecard (CSC) methodology was applied to assess the performance of two Primary Health



Centers (PHCs) in two Mandals of Visakhapatnam District, Andhra Pradesh in the context of primary healthcare service delivery. Devarapalle Mandal was one of them. For many like Mangamma, the PHC system is the most important and often last resort for these poor, vulnerable and marginalized sections of society.

Our study observed amongst other things, the absence of indicators to measure quality of service delivery. Any improvements in the health care delivery system are largely individualized and rarely systemic which invariably result in low user satisfaction levels. The project was undertaken in six phases. Phase I consisted of preparatory activities and capacity building for undertaking the pilot project implementation with community participation. The key activities undertaken in this phase involved: selection of Community Resource Persons (CRPs); training program design; preparation of training manual; conducting the training workshop; and operational planning for the pilot exercise. Phase II saw the actual implementation of the pilot through trained CRPs. All key activities involved in the scorecard process such as input tracking, community assessment, self-evaluation by service providers,



consolidation of scorecards and the interface meeting, were undertaken during this phase. Finally, during phase III, post-implementation activities were taken up. This involved preparation of action plans and conducting a dissemination workshop involving key stakeholders such as the state and local government, civil society organizations, etc.

At each community location, the users of the PHC services were divided into male and female groups. A total of 24 groups discussions were conducted across

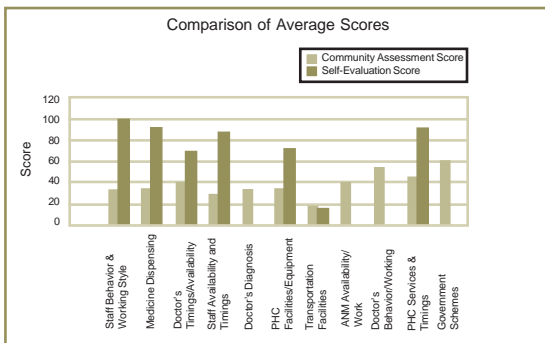


the 12 villages in the process generating a cumulative total of 153 indicators. The community rated the various indicators on a scale of 0-100 to indicate their perception regarding the quality of service delivery. They also expressed their qualitative views to justify their choice and rating of indicators. Then followed consolidations of the indicators which were done through issue based aggregation, simple weighted criteria for ranking and a composite rating system wherein the rating was based on calculating the average mean and range after calculating the composite scores for each indicator.



The service provider self-evaluation brought out the perspectives from the supply side. Interface meetings brought the community and service providers together and the results of the exercises were shared. In these meetings the service providers and the users discussed issues that they felt were important. Subsequently, action plans that clearly identified activities to be undertaken, people responsible, and the timelines were prepared for bringing in improvements. In the action plans the key focus was on two things:





1. Actions that could be taken immediately by the service providers and the community at the local level without impacting administrative procedures; and
2. Actions that needed administrative intervention and that were brought to the notice of the officials for necessary action.

## Key learnings

Poor staff behavior and working style lead to poor accountability and weak responsiveness. Weak support services and infrastructure issues and low awareness among the community was also to be addressed. Overall, the quality of service delivery was quite poor. The Medical Officer and the Staff expressed their willingness to undergo training to bring improvements in their attitudes and orientation to service delivery and also proactively generate awareness among the community so that the satisfaction levels of the patients can be improved. The timings of the Doctor and Staff were changed to suit community needs. A system to redress grievances and display medicine inventory was agreed upon and put into implementation. On the whole the CSC exercise was able to reduce the gap between the service providers and the users, in turn increasing overall satisfaction levels.

## Social Accountability Mechanisms and the State – Does the emerging paradigm of social accountability erode the role of the state?

- *Bharat Ramanan and Vivek Misra*

Democracy, above all, is about being able to hold governments accountable for their actions. While a traditional measure of accountability has been the instrument of elections, it is now becoming evident that this, by no means, is the only accountability mechanism. Today, there exist more accountability mechanisms than ever before led by an incessant public debate on the topic. A more empowered civil society and citizenry taking over what was traditionally the government's domain raises the question - Is the state's role becoming less relevant in the face of these social accountability mechanisms? This article provides an argument that the state retains its importance in the changed scenario.

If one were to examine accountability mechanisms in the past few decades, it would be clear that many of these failed to produce considerable impact. This failure inspired innovation in the area of Social Accountability. The State however remains preminent. It would be easy to assume that since the state is now including more actors in governance and is fast institutionalizing contemporary social accountability mechanisms; its role has become less relevant. Quite

to the contrary, the state's role has become more pronounced. Clearly, the ultimate responsibility of ensuring that these accountability mechanisms are used well and are making an impact lies with the State. It need only give away what it considers useful to delegate but in no way has it shed its role as a driver of change and a systemic agent.

Indeed in a globalized world, the inter-connectedness of peoples will be inevitable. However, as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Administrative Reforms Commission of India notes in its approach paper, the institutions of state – legislative, executive, and judicial – will have to be strengthened to meet the challenges of globalization. This supports our contention that the state's role still remains central. The irreducible nature of the state forms the crux of this argument.

The traditional top-down governance mechanisms failed to involve the civil society as an active partner in the governance process. In the contemporary scenario however, the state has realized the importance of non-state actors and their role in the governance process. It has embarked upon a more inclusive model



by inviting active participation from non-state actors, thus securing a cooperative approach to governance. To put things in context, the governance process today armed with multiple accountability mechanisms through civil society partnerships has seen a shift in the balance of (soft) power among different types of actors. However, the overarching power of the state has not necessarily been 'rolled back' by this development.

None of these mechanisms would be fully operational or effective without the state's active support and participation. Neither has the state abdicated its responsibility by involving other actors. Thus, the civil society is an empowering agent for the citizen. It helps in creating a climate for enhancing democratic governance rather than the eclipsing of all government.

In India, the 'Right to Information Act, 2005' has been enacted and is a powerful legislation to hold the state accountable for its actions. It needs to be mentioned that it was because of the efforts of Civil Society Organizations and social activism that the demand for such legislation became stronger. The State responded to the growing demand by enacting the legislation. But without the State's active role in enacting the law and also in implementing it, the efforts of civil society would have borne little fruit. Such an accountability mechanism has only proven that the State sees much benefit in securing cooperation from various quarters in the governance process. It has accommodated them with the changing paradigm of governance but has certainly not lost its own relevance.

Another interesting example is that of Social Audit and its increasing use by various groups. In Andhra Pradesh in southern India, the State Government, Action Aid, Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) and the Centre for Good Governance (CGG), Hyderabad undertook a massive Social Audit exercise in Anantapur District which was immensely successful. The exercise brought together people, civil society and Government representatives for evaluating the state of implementation of the Andhra Pradesh Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in the district and bringing about necessary course corrections. This demonstrates a complimentary relationship between the Government and other actors through the use of

a contemporary accountability mechanism. What it points to is the changing trend of the State co-opting non-state actors into the governance process. This does not obviously cause any erosion of the State's eminence.

There is no gainsaying that these movements will give way to a more progressive government. The emerging complimentary relationship between the State and non-state actors will have a positive impact on the governance process (es). The dynamics may differ between countries as would their contexts. The idea of the state as an authoritative allocator of resources and the primary governance actor will last forever.

## Trivia

### Did You Know

- 1) *That text messaging service (SMS) is used by people to register complaints against corrupt officials to the Office of the Ombudsman in Philippines*
- 2) *That the mayor of Seoul receives postage free postcards complaining about corruption.*
- 3) *That Transparency International Malaysia runs a toll-free corruption hotline.*
- 4) *That there exists a citizen ombudsman in Japan who is a lawyer with special training who can examine complex public expenditure accounts*
- 5) *Public Record of Operations and Finance hosts "Puttana on Air," a weekly radio program in the Kannada language covering problems of citizens including local government finances, corruption, ward problems, health and sanitation*
- 6) *That over 5000 people led by Samarthan, an NGO in Maharashtra carried begging bowls demanding increased budgetary allocation for education. They asked passers by to contribute to the State's coffers for education thus embarrassing the Chief Minister who ordered a Task Force to address the problem*
- 7) *That the reports of the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism on President Joseph Estrada's unexplained wealth saw*



*impeachment suits against him and led to his eventual overthrow.*

- 8) *That the Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Governance's anti-corruption radio programme in Philippines has Government officials on their toes in case they become "CCAGGed" (a new slang term for having one's misdeeds exposed on the air).*
- 9) *That Lok Satta in Andhra Pradesh, India has organized citizens to monitor fuel outlets; thus effectively stopping short-selling in all 1,500 gasoline stations in Andhra Pradesh.*

broader understanding amongst various Government and Civil Society Organization towards the potential use of Social Accountability Tools in promoting good governance. SasaNet aims to develop a cadre of trainers who can support various Governments and other interested organizations in using the social accountability tools and to assist them in piloting and learning crucial lessons in this aspect. The network will offer a platform for mutual cooperation, exchange of experiences among organizations, associations and informal groups whose activity is related to enhancing accountability in governance. The SasaNet website is the electronic voice of the South Asia Social Accountability Network and a key tool in capacity building and communication efforts of institutions and individuals interested in social accountability. The website offers a comprehensive knowledge base which includes conceptual information, set of tools, best practices and case studies for facilitating enhanced social accountability in governance.

## 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

For details log on to [www.sasanet.org](http://www.sasanet.org)

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