

Event Report

In-Country Consultation meeting on the
formation of Community of Practices on Social
Accountability Tools (Pakistan)

Date: February 09, 2012

Venue: SDPI Conference Hall



Organised by: SDPI

In partnership with

CUTS-International and ANSA SAR

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Agenda of the Meeting

1. Registration and introduction of participants
2. Briefing by SDPI on Social Accountability Tools by Gulbaz Ali Khan
3. Social Accountability experience – Hisaar Foundation by Farzana Saleem
4. Stocktaking of social accountability work in Pakistan by Fayyaz Yaseen
5. Creating and sustaining online communities by Adnan Rasool
6. How to maintain the CoP's work on SAc – The way forward (Open Discussion)
7. Vote of Thanks by Vaqar Ahmed

Background

A country consultation for the formation of Community of Practice on Social Accountability (CoPSA) tool was held under a joint initiative of Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in South Asia (ANSA SAR), Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) International and Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI). The delegates of civil society and development organisations from all across the country participated in the meeting. The objective of the meeting was to seek inputs from Pakistan Social Accountability Network (PSAN) members and the like-minded organisations for the formation of CoPSA tools.

The specific objectives of this meeting were to:

- build a network of like-minded individuals/organisations to retain, exchange and manage knowledge and experiences on SAc tools; and
- provide a shared context for people to communicate and share information, stories and personal experiences in a way that build understandings and insights about SAc.

The noted speakers that deliberated on the above stated topic on the occasion included Zaffarullah Khan, Executive Director, Centre for Civic Education, Islamabad; Gulbaz Ali Khan, Consultant SDPI; Farzana Saleem, COO, HISAAR Foundation; and Adnan Rasool, Deputy Executive, Director Centre for Enterprise Trade and Development, while Fayyaz Yaseen (SDPI) moderated the open discussion on the formation of CoPSA.

Proceedings

After registration of participants, Gulbaz briefed participants on social accountability (SAc). He emphasised on how the political, fiscal, administrative and legal barriers in supply-side accountability process prevailed that created the need and demand for SAc. Gulbaz noted that the provision of service delivery by state institutions was poor and failed in taking care of the needs of citizens, especially the poor and marginalised. He was of the view that instead of

providing more funds in the system there is a need to increase efficiency, effectiveness and equity of public expenditures. The implementation of SAc tools may enhance civic engagement with improved governance, increase in developmental effectiveness and informed policy decisions that can lead to poverty reduction, strength democracy and people's empowerment. Gulbaz said that citizens should have easier and quicker access to the information for implementation of SAc tools.

Zaffarullah Khan highlighted important issues and collapses in development programmes initiated by the government. The government's initiatives in the development sector were dependent on input-based measures. The outcomes of most of the projects were totally neglected and ignored. The lack of capacity of running development projects by the government was shown by the collapse of 82 percent development budget in 2011. He said all these facts raise the need for establishing a local civil society group. This group may help promoting SAc and building capacity of organisations and citizen groups to implement SAc tools at local levels.

Marvi Sirmed, National Project Manager, Strengthening Democracy through Parliamentary Development (SDPD) emphasised on the importance of civic engagements in budgetary allocations. She lamented the fact that Pakistan did not have a proper mechanism of incorporating peoples' aspirations in budget preparations. There is a need for devising institution of public hearing" in parliamentary standing committees to make it more accountable, efficient and representative of aspirations of the country. This could only be done by building pressure on governments and politicians through the proposed groups or communities.

Farzana Saleem, Chief Operating Officer, Hisaar Foundation, Karachi, laid stress on building mutual accountability mechanisms. She explained through her presentation that in mutual accountability all stakeholders are accountable to each other including government agencies, private sector, CSOs and citizens. She said that promoting mutual accountability can help create awareness among public towards their responsibilities.

During the session on stocktaking of SAc work in Pakistan, the work by SDPI, HISAAR Foundation, ActionAid Pakistan, Centre for Peace and Development Initiative, Omar Asghar Khan Foundation, Sungi Development Foundation, Integrated Rural Support Programme, Shehri Organisation Karachi and other organisations was highlighted.

During the discussion, Syed Waqar Gillani, one of the participants from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province stressed on institutionalisation of SAc tools for providing effective service delivery and ensuring transparency at federal, provincial and local levels.

Participants noted the fact that media in Pakistan had developed credibility with a vibrant voice, and thus, it was a good option to involve media in the derive towards promoting SAc in Pakistan and implementing its tools for improving the service delivery.

Highlighting the challenges, such as framework development, deciding on mandate, capacity building of member organisations, knowledge creation and dissemination, running advocacy and

awareness campaigns, and ensuring financial sustainability of CoPSA, participants of the in-country consultation meeting also shared the points that could extend a leverage to support CoPSA.

Adnan Rasool, a social media expert currently working as Deputy Executive Director, Centre for Enterprise Trade and Development spoke on how to maintain and sustain online communities of practices in a living way and dwelled upon the possible ways that can be opted in this regard. He said making online groups, establishing web-pages and generating newsletters were among the options had marked relatively lower success. However, interacting through social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and others can be a good option to sustain CoPSA. To make this CoP alive and more proactive, participants also suggested organising exposure visits, seminars and sensitisation of media and promoting research work to spread awareness on importance of SAC and its tools in improving governance in Pakistan.

The meeting concluded after a formal vote of thanks offered by Vaqar Ahmed, Head Economic Growth Unit, SDPI.

List of Participants

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