

**Event Report**  
**Inception cum Design Workshop of CoPSA**  
**Colombo, Sri Lanka**

***Background***

Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) organised a two day regional inception & design workshop in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on February 29-March 01, 2012. The participants included country anchors and core members of ‘Community of Practice on Social Accountability’ (CoPSA) from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal Sri Lanka and India. This workshop was held to formally launch CoPSA and gather views emerged out during various country consultations held in all five South Asian countries mentioned above so that a consensus can be arrived on the final design of the CoPSA. CoPSA is an initiative of knowledge exchange and creation in the area of social accountability (SAC) ‘Affiliated Network of Social Accountability in South Asia Region’ based at Dhaka, Bangladesh.

***Participation***

More than 23 participants participated in the workshop. Two representatives each from Pakistan (SDPI and Hisaar Foundation) and Nepal (Pro Public and SAP-Nepal), three representatives from Bangladesh (PRIP Trust and MJF), six representatives from India (Centre for Civil Society, Sambandh and CUTS), three from Sri Lanka (Centre for Policy Alternatives, and Asia Foundation) One each from ANSA SAR and IGS, Bangladesh and two local participants (Transparency International and Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development (IPID) attended the workshop. Most of the participants were practitioners of SAC tools in various areas and have hands on experiences in the area of governance.



***Proceedings***

***Day 1***

***Session: I: Inaugural Session***

The Session commenced with the self-introduction of participants.

**George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS**

**International**, in his introductory remarks welcomed all the participants and conveyed thanks to all for sparing their valuable time to share their hands on experiences and suggestions for the design of CoPSA. He said that Community of Practice (CoP) is ‘a group of people who share a common concern or a passion on something they do and learn how to do it better based on regular interactions within the group’. He said



that CoP has an identity defined by a shared domain, and a mutual relationship among members that enable to learn and share and have practitioners. It is a combination of three elements which constitute and further cultivate CoP. He mentioned that CoP includes several live activities related to peer learning, outreach activities, capacity building activities. He also provided a brief overview of the activities under the initiative and proposed country consultations scheduled on various dates as well.

He further said that CoPSA aims to bring people together working on SAc in the South Asia region to exchange lessons and share experiences. He talked in brief about the process of identification of the country anchors and core group members from five partner countries and country consultations and objective of the present workshop. The objective was only to consolidate the deliberations held during country consultations but to get suggestions regarding chalking out a framework of CoPSA and finalising the proposed activities and web-based portal as well.



**Naimur Rehman, Chief Operating Officer of ANSA-SAR** said that ANSA has taken this initiative of CoPSA to consolidate the SAc practices in the region. ANSA is trying to focus on deepening knowledge on SAc concepts and practices to push for research, case-works, and peer learning forums to enrich the body of SAc knowledge and making strategic investment on SAc innovations and promoting networking and capacity building among SAc practitioners in South Asia region.

He said that the whole work of ANSA will prove to be as building block of CoP which is very crucial. He talked about the nurturing and consolidated sharing of knowledge, experience, tools, and lessons from practice among the partners of ANSA-SAR and beyond; facilitating networking and knowledge exchange among engaged stakeholders of SAc domain; encouraging innovations in SAc tools; and helping create new knowledge for further enhancing the existing SAc tools or designing new tools and mainstream SAc tools and integrate it into country/region specific work by generating systematic approaches across networks and regions.

**Dr. Wijaya Jayatilaka, Executive Director, Transparency International**

of Sri Lanka explained the meaning of governance and shed light on the overall situation of governance in Sri Lanka and its impact on the economy. He talked about the post war challenges before the Sri Lanka and underlined key challenges of rising inflation, unemployment, feudal ethos and low rate of women political representation in Asia which are resulting into non-inclusive growth of democracy and development in the country. The central-peripheral relations are weak and corruption in the country is rampant and one-fourth of people are paying bribes mainly to police, revenue and land departments which means that there is lack of transparency, accountability and good governance. He stated that state and society should bargain with each other well so that the opportunity of civic engagement can be enhanced by the government positively. Finally he said that the concept of SAc must be build up at the grassroots and citizens be engaged in that process so that change can be initiated at the grassroots.



*Session II: Understanding the Concept of CoP*  
*Moderated by Naimur Rahman, ANSA-SAR*



Session II started with the presentation on overview of CoPSA by **Om Prakash Arya, Senior Project Coordinator, CUTS**. He defined the meaning of CoP and said that it is a group of like-minded people who share a concern or passion to deepen their knowledge and expertise related to a subject by interacting. He also said CoPSA is an active phenomenon to invest, build, convene, provide, share, innovate,

amplify, filter, advertise and advocate for strengthening, spreading and institutionalising SAc which requires relationship and sense of belonging among members. It will bring out the community's own internal direction, character and energy. He also talked about the initiative of CoPSA in brief and its activities in detail.

Naimur Rahman in his session on 'concept of CoP and illustrative examples' said that CoPSA is all about innovations and sharing of knowledge and experiences within the wider community through appropriate and effective tools. ANSA has been supporting SAc concepts and practices to push for research, case-works, and peer learning forums to enrich the body of SAc knowledge which is a strategic investment on SAc innovations. Total 22 initiatives taken by different organisations have been supported to strengthen networking, capacity building facilitation of SAc practitioners and emergence of four CoPs. One unanimous realisation from ANSA's experience was the need to

anchor emerging SAc practices around thematic ‘hubs’ to identify leading proponents and practices converging around a specific theme and build their capacity to deepen and widen their interventions, on one hand, and mobilise new ideas and promote in-country innovations on SAc, on the other.



He emphasised on the continued regional knowledge sharing role through thematic CoPs while encouraging in-country Action Network within these CoPs. He said that there are four CoPs, one each on RTI, SAc, Rights and Entitlements and Local Governance, as the process to start for converging SAc knowledge and actors on specific theme to widen and deepen agenda and co-creating new ideas on SAc innovations in-country. These CoPs have also been visualised as a vehicle to bring in new organisations to widen and deepen ANSA network.

He talked about the theory of change and underlined the importance of local contexts in which changes are happening. He further said that context specific are the main drivers of any change and determines the effectiveness of accountability tools and the model adopted and generating credible information and indicators to hold systems accountable.

### *Open Session*

During this session the issue of sustainability was underlined and discussed along with the importance of tools of SAc and approaches used to implement these. In some cases these tools are misused by adopting wrong approaches. In response to the concern of identifying the legitimised actor to make citizens accountable, it was articulated that the larger question is that



the state need to be accountable towards citizens rather than citizens towards it. Detailed discussion was initiated on accountability triangle and its three major components. There was also a query about the standardisation of tools. One set of accountability tools cannot be used everywhere because there could be multiplicity of contexts and tools must be customised as per local contexts and needs.

*Session III: Incorporating Ideas of Country Consultation in Design of CoPSA*  
*Moderated by George Cheriyan, CUTS*

***Pakistan***

*Fayyaz Yaseen from 'Sustainable Development and Policy Institute' (SDPI)*



He presented the findings of Country Consultation held in Pakistan and said that background for SAc is taking some shape in Pakistan and few organisations such as Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Rural Support Programmes (RSPs) and Pakistan Social Accountability Network (PSAN) are working on accountability issues at the grassroots. He also identified the gaps in the field of transparency and accountability and said that SAc is a new concept and

there is lack of in-depth understanding at the grassroots and even at the organisational level. In Pakistan the political local governance system is less active and Freedom of Information Ordinance is also not very effective in Pakistan.

Fayyaz also stated that in Pakistan few enabling factors, such as relatively free media, greater political acumen among the masses, urge to provide input in decision making process of the government, increased demand for transparency among politicians and citizens demand for tangible deliverables, less likely to get carried away with political sloganeering which could be real contributors in governance and accountability related initiatives. He further said that in Pakistan the number of individual voices to demand transparency and accountability of public officials is increasing day by day and there is conducive environment to induce SAc concepts and improve governance in the country.

He mentioned about Pakistan's SAc network and its members as well and said that this network has wide reach at the grassroots and over 100 organisations are its members. He said that most of the potential members are already a part of PSAN, and they have understanding and exposure to each other's work SAc, and are willing to cooperate and become an active CS group to promote SAc in Pakistan and greater civil and political acceptance for SAc based community.

There are few challenges in front of CoPSA thrown up in the country consultation meeting in Pakistan. He said that there is lack of governance framework and clarity on the mandate or specific role of the civil society and capacity building of member organisations or SAc professionals working

in various organisations. He further said that it is quite typical to create SAc related knowledge and dissemination among the CoP in all corners of South Asian countries. He also spoke on the financial sustainability of CoPSA as well.

As a way forward, he mentioned that CoPSA will be an alive and proactive community with an interactive web-portal and opportunity of cross learnings in form of exposure visits etc. He suggested conducting seminars and sensitisation workshops for media since it is very important in context of Pakistan.

## ***Nepal***

*Kedar Khadka from Pro Public*

He presented the findings of the Country Consultation held in Nepal and stated its objectives. During the consultation, knowledge, experience, tools and lessons were shared with the participants and brainstorm was done on SAc Tools so that an opportunity can be created for advancing understanding on the CoPSA. He mentioned about the institutionalised tools on Accountability and talked about Democratic constitution, Good Governance & RTI Act, Citizen Charters, Public Hearing/Audit, Citizen Report Card and Vibrant Media which are proving as enabling factors in Nepal. He cited few examples of few publications published on transparency and accountability in Nepal which are extremely useful for practitioners.



He talked about the tools being used by various organisations like Citizen Charter, Budgets of local bodies under that Check list of relevant Laws, Policies and Regulations that affect a citizen's life are made. He also spoke on Right to Information, Civic Education, Public Expenditure Tracking, Citizen Report Card and Public Revenue Monitoring. In Nepal public participatory tools like Multi-stakeholder groups; Participatory Planning, Participatory Budgeting; Community Led Procurement, Declaration of Assets and Community Led Procurement are also in practice. He further said that government collaboration is key in transparency and accountability initiatives taken by the civil society in drawing experiences; therefore it was suggested to share strategies and models with the government. He said that in Nepal more than 25 accountability tools have been used by various organisations but their success varies.

While throwing light on suggestions which came out of the consultation he said that in practice of SAc tools uniformity has to be maintained and an E-portal has to be developed where the customised tools and approaches can be uploaded. This portal would also be helpful in strengthening regional network under CoPSA as well. New practitioners should be sensitised on usages and marketing of accountability tools. He further suggested organising Share-Fair on tools and experiences and publishing handbooks, videos, documentaries on successful pilots on tools to reach at the grassroots.

## ***Bangladesh***

*Monjum Nabar from PRIP Trust*



She presented the findings of the Bangladesh Country Consultation and said that there are around 20 SAc tools used at different levels like policy formulation, policy analysis and implementation and monitoring and evaluation. She said that accountability tools are hugely used in the budget processes as well.

Monjum also stated about the good practices and said that in the Bangladesh there is a developed citizen's platform which is acting as a pressure group for improvement of public services on health, education and agriculture. There is a developed civil society forum that is taking a lead role in collective problem solving. Efforts have been made for capacity building of female UP members and training of journalists on good practices and learnings of the local government functions and activities which are proving helpful for CSOs as well. She also said the in Bangladesh there is a developed website and newspaper for documentation and dissemination of good practices which are promoting inclusion of community facilitators in the local government standing committees of Union Parishad and citizen monitoring of the public services.

She recommended to provide support for building network of the SAc practitioners in Bangladesh and sharing of knowledge, experience, tools and learning from practice regionally. She also suggested developing an anthology of SAc tools and also develop case studies and a way to disseminate those across the region.

She also recommended to introduce a Tripartite (Central government, Local government and CSO) approach for mainstreaming tools and process of SAc, provide strategic direction to conduct media campaign from local to regional level for promoting SAc process and include parliamentarians (Local MPs and Standing Committees) in the process of learning sharing identification and documentation of regional best practice and tools.

Lastly she presented that SAc shall be included in the mechanism, especially in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation giving priority to the marginalised and socially excluded groups, and women (considering the Bangladeshi situation). Dialogue with local government bodies has to be established to validate SAc findings and pursue issues to be taken care for strengthening accountability process and develop in country and regional "Resource Pool" in the country.

## ***Sri Lanka***

*Sisira Kumarsiri from Asia Foundation*

He presented the Sri Lanka country presentation in which he talked about the transparency, accountability and good governance-related pilots, programmes and interventions being undertaken by the Asia Foundation and others. He talked about the process of organising country consultations held at two places in which more than 80 participants from different CSOs and others took part. He also mentioned about the tools of accountability and governance being undertaken in Sri Lanka.



He also said that in the country various NGOs are in some sort of informal network which includes NGOs from grassroots as well which is working directly with the community on transparency and accountability-related issues. He further said that few of the service providers are cooperative in nature and helpful in the implementation of such accountability interventions.

He said that under CoPSA some activities has to be done in Sri Lanka as well which can bring together all the CSOs working on the governance and accountability issues and the existing informal network can be strengthened at the national level. Leading CSOs and other NGOs will take interest in the activities of the CoPSA in the country and definitely replicate the successful cases in their field areas which came out during the country consultations done by the Asia Foundation with the help of Centre for Policy Alternatives, Sri Lanka.

## ***India***

*Madhu Sudan Sharma from CUTS*



He presented the outcomes of India Country Consultation and provided a brief overview of the consultation. The objectives of the consultation was to bring together relevant stakeholders on a common platform and share their hands on experiences in line with designing a robust framework of CoPSA and broadening the base of planning process and bringing new insights and experiences from various actors engaged in similar initiatives in India.

He threw light on the points emerged out of the consultation. During the consultation concept or meaning or philosophy of 'CoP' was made clear, and the project objectives and activities were also discussed. He said that the CoPSA can be developed as a knowledge market or depository of best

practices where members can exchange the same for advancing their practices. While underlining the importance on the design of CoPSA, he stated that the design needs to be a good mix of formal and informal structure in order to nurture and build it and make it relevant for members and convenient for learners and contributors. The design and work of CoPSA should be helpful for ANSA and their partners for deepening and widening their work on SAC. Coping with the diversity will be one factor on which success of CoPSA depends. The investment in CoPSA is a strategy to create linkages between different actors, practitioners of SAC for knowledge exchange, mobilising innovation, new ideas and using it for advancing the practices and action on the ground. He suggested for documenting the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and uploading the same on the website.

He further said that this CoPSA could a good depository of knowledge and users of CoPSA can use it in various ways but it should be left to the members that how they use it. It was also suggested how CoPSA can help donor agencies to meet out their fiduciary responsible by getting results in the programmes of governance, development effectiveness and empowerment through the use of SAC tools.

He said that the CoPSA would not only be a vibrant platform for the members to engage in but a platform of common identity of members, mutual relationship among real practitioners and a platform for practitioners to clearly articulating the local contexts of any success or failures. CoPSA is a strategy to create linkages between different actors, practitioners of SAC for knowledge exchange, mobilising innovation and new ideas and using those knowledge and innovations for advancing the practices and action on the ground. He added that at the website of CoP serious business happens Unlike social networking sites, but here one challenge would be to change the knowledge sharing attitude of the people and decentralization in terms of resources, responsibilities etc. will bring so that sense of belonging can be created among community and Involvement of those people who are not able to use various technologies and comfortable in English can also be made part of CoPSA. In present scenario, there is an overload of work, information, emails etc. on individuals. Hence, membership should be institutions and individuals.

He said that this initiative would be an incentive for the members to be part of such CoPs such as getting known to others and growing with relevant knowledge exchange etc. and to get people involved in the discussions. This will help in building relationship with the progressive community out of your community of practice. CoPSA can create space for community-based content curation and peer review in the area of SAC. Users can also promote any important idea. It is also important for CoPSA to promote quality in the SAC work.

He suggested some tips for mobilising people to be associated with the CoPSA and said that it should be open platform where any practitioner can be part of it. There should not be any hierarchy among members and anyone can take part in an individual or institutional capacity. He added that it should not be owned by any one institution but by a large group of practitioners on SAC.

He emphasised on the importance of sustainability of such innovative intervention and said if entire initiative is result-oriented and concrete results are produced on ground rather than giving too much focus on the processes this could be proved as a sustainable model. He further suggested incentivising the member (individual & institutional) of the CoP to make the CoPSA sustainable. People or institution will not pay for the experimental knowledge so some validated knowledge also should be uploaded on the portal. Extra services provided by the CoPSA can be a

paid service for generating revenue. The component of CoPSA can be developed as a knowledge market where members can buy knowledge not necessarily by paying in cash.

*Summing up the day one proceedings*  
*Om Prakash Arya from CUTS*

While summing up day one proceedings, he said that discussions helped in better understanding of the governance and accountability scenario in all the five countries mentioning the local contexts, expectations and strategies to engage in CoPSA activities. He said that CoPSA should be quasi formal in structure. It was good to have discussion on constructive engagement with the government, sense of belongingness among members which is owned & led by community and bring new organisations and innovations under CoPSA.

He talked about the dynamics of human behaviour for sharing knowledge and said that it should be incentivised in a sustainable manner so that community can be made more interactive in nature and a validated knowledge can be generated in which practitioners themselves validating that knowledge through their practical experience. He also underlined the need of standardisation of SAc tools to fit in various country contexts as per local realities so that various kinds of barriers can be overcome including technical and language by ensuring participation of grassroots practitioners in the CoPSA so that variability in the capability of NGOs working on governance and accountability issues can also be coped up with. He also discussed usages and misusages of the SAc tools and said the misuse has to be avoided. He further said it is good that CoPSA builds on the existing networks and resources available for the accountability works in different countries and leverage upon the same to create a multiplying effect.

## **Day 2**

The day two of the workshop started with the recapitulation of the previous day's proceedings. It was stated that CoPSA is an opportunity to reach-out to the policy makers and grassroots so that mutual accountability can be ensured and discussions initiated around setting up of benchmarks for the initiative. The need of customising and standardising the SAc tools and contextualising was also good to learn. The emphasis laid on the engagement of policymakers and inclusion of local communities in the decision making of CoPSA was nice to observe and learn from discussions. CoPSA would be a multi stakeholder's platform which will be able to create critical mass on the SAc and prove the power of empirical data to create evidences of advocacy for accountability issues in the region.



Though this intervention is most systematic and scientific platform of sharing knowledge on tools of SAc but it would be very interesting to see that how the context of it is set with a common consensus? The underlining of the research work done by the CoPSA and better understanding on the governance scenario of the South Asia Region (SAR) was nice. It was mentioned that all the five South Asian countries are at different levels in terms of governance so level playing field would really be a tough task. It was also emerged out of the discussion that CoPSA will be owned and led by community itself and sense of ownership will be created but bringing new organisations and doing innovations by overcoming the technological and language barriers would be a big challenge maintaining the quasi-formal structure.

It also emerged out of the discussions that the existing network of the SAc in Pakistan and Nepal will prove complimentary to this initiative and CoPSA work will be built on the same rather than starting from the scratch. It also came up that the mechanisms of knowledge sharing should be simple for all sorts of stakeholders and be introduced with the well set benchmarks of outcomes and results for years to come. Information generation and dissemination is also important so that community can be brought together and issues can set for advocacy by the CoPSA. In CoPSA most of the good practices and exemplary work will be consolidated from all the regions of the five countries and country priorities will be set to work on.

#### *Session IV: Activity Design under CoPSA*

*Brainstorming on the design, specific activities and Action plan*

*Moderated by Naimur Rehman from ANSA-SAR*

*Presented by Om Prakash Arya from CUTS*

Under this session comments and suggestions were invited from the participants about the capacity building of members, sensitisation of funding agencies and promoting innovations. It was suggested by the participants that there is no need of creating new SAc networks in the countries where already such network exists. Such networks exist in Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka but not in India and Bangladesh. Keeping in mind the wide geographical area of India some regional networks can also be thought of. After network some minimum set of action agenda which can be called as common minimum programme can be set for this action network initially for one year. It would be important for CoPSA to look into the successes as well as failures because some time failures are also equally important to avoid further failures. In the initial year the existing manuals on usages of SAc tools, compendiums and other publications from different countries can be gathered and uploaded on the website. Stocktaking exercise of defining tools or models used under the intervention will be done.



It was suggested that after duration of every four-six months, capacity building workshop needs to be organised based on the needs of the member community and also developing a depository of who is working on what and in which sector that will be very useful for the members. In the time to come to the website of the CoPSA which has to be ready with a space to all respective countries and research work has to be initiated at the regional level and bringing new members from remote areas of different countries. It was also suggested some capacity and innovation gap analysis have to be done among the existing members so that a pull factor can be infused in it. It was decided the CoPSA will do its first activity of capacity building by coming June, 2012 and by the following month of July some momentum has to be created in CoPSA.

For financial sustainability of the CoPSA work some sensitisation of the funding agencies has to be done though ANSA can fund some of the in country activities if requested for but the results and outcomes of the planned activities must be tangible and concrete. For this either country anchor or coo anchor of respective country can put up proposal through CUTS. Participants suggested earmarking some annual funds for country activities too. It was also decided that CoPSA can print some policy briefs and research papers on an annual basis to enhance the quality of the portal.

### Session IV: Designing the web-based community under CoPSA

Presented by Om Prakash Arya  
As he said that community refers to the environment in which

people interact, learn and build relationships, an online learning community will be established for various purposes. On one hand it will be a depository of resources in various forms, innovations, a database of resource persons/agencies and on the other hand it will be a platform for discussion and others for the objective of knowledge exchange and creation and vast outreach.

While discussing the activities he said that based on the design for an online learning community emerged out of the IDW, a website would be created with a required space and domain name with several facilities. He further said that various intelligently chosen IT tools will be incorporated in the website to maximise learning and sharing. A Group email networking all the members of CoPSA will be created to get them networked and new people interested in the area of SAc will be motivated to get networked and contribute. Several techniques would be adopted to enhance the outreach activities and also SAc. It will act as a depository for learning modules, handbooks, case studies etc. and be linked with the database of best practices and resource staffs. He also presented the dummy website of CoPSA developed by CUTS which is as follows.

*Presented by Sujatha Muthaya, Centre for Civil Society, New Delhi*

She shared her experience of running around 10-15 web portals in their organisation. Initially she suggested three things and said that it is extremely important to define the portal, knowing the portal users and structuring the prime drivers of the portal. She explained that the portal has to be defined by defining the objectives of the portal keeping in mind the tools to be used, strategies to evolve the portal, dynamic information system keeping the used mindset and interests at centre so that the community of practice work differently from the community of interest as both are entirely different concepts from each other.



She further suggested that a web portal of any CoP should be linked or tagged with such content or organisations or personalities that can pull the attention of an information seeker in the website so that it can attract practitioners of various fields so that they can use the knowledge and information of the website. At the same time the portal should not only have the validated knowledge but also knowledge related to some emerging praxis as well. She said there could be three sorts of users of a portal. One is experts who can be helpful in advocacy and further sensitisation of more experts on the subject. Second one is practitioners who are the main network members and have the onus of scaling up the network with the inclusion of more practitioners and the third category is nascent or potential practitioners who can learn from the network's activities and build a cadre of future networkers.

While suggesting the way forward for a web portal, she mentioned that such a collaborative portal has to be linked with a content management system in which users have to define their experiences so that it can be made interesting. There has to be a source of value addition for the users and it has to be

physical depositories of case studies, tools etc. for members, organisations. On the portal it is always good if there is an online panel expert who guide and answer the users. The FAQs and profile of diverse stakeholders have to be posted on the portal for the benefit of users. If dynamic options such as blogs, news-roll, webinars, interactive tools, fellowships, multimedia have to be heavily used in multi lingual forms so that the bandwidth of users can be wide. In the portal some SMS based or voice based technological interface tools definitely adds value to it.

## *VI Concluding Session*

### *Country Priority Settings*



Under this exercise participants were divided in country groups in which all country participants discussed their immediate priorities for coming months under the CoPSA. The country groups were asked to finalise and consolidate priorities and send the same to CUTS so that these can be accommodated in regional activities. Participants were provided enough time to hear the views of participants in order to know their suggestions and formulate the activities as well to be conducted in their respective countries. All the count anchors agreed to send the report soon.

### *Concluding remarks and vote of thanks*

George Cheriyan

He summed up two days' proceedings of the workshop and said that during the interactions several country specific suggestions came up from the floor which will be helpful in the design of the CoPSA. He mentioned that an e mail group of all participants would be initiated soon. He thanked all the participants for their valuable comments, suggestions and active engagement throughout the workshop.

### *Highlights*

- Highly interactive workshop with the participation from all five countries
- Inputs gathered on design of the CoPSA and brainstorming was done to arrive at consensus
- Momentum generated among core members and country anchors to take CoPSA forward

### *Key recommendations*

- The pre-existing country-level SAc or governance networks will be identified or if not existing than will be formed in all the four countries
- Based on the country consultations and inception workshop country-specific time bound activity plans will be developed and submitted to CUTS to accommodate in the regional action plan

- It was strongly felt that periodic meetings of the community members has to happen either face to face or using some web-based tools so that strategies can be finalised and experiences be shared
- The country chapters also shall be providing enough space on the CoPSA website to local perspective, practices and networks can also be reflected on it
- The community shall be loaded with members from academia but practitioners only initially be allowed to be part of it
- There has to be a regional balance among four countries so that members and activities can be accommodated in it
- Use of mobile technology can be introduced in CoPSA activities and among the community
- Activities has to be result-oriented and concrete results must be produced within stipulated timeframe with the ownership of the CoP itself to ensure sustainability
- Language and technology should not be a barrier for members to come and reflect on their experiences
- CoPSA activities should commence in June 2012 based on country recommendations
- Profile of diverse stakeholders has to be posted on the portal for the benefit of users
- Dynamic options like blogs, news-roll, webinars, interactive tools, fellowships, multimedia will give the portal a variety and help making it interesting
- SMS or voice-based technological interface tools will adds value to the portal
- Earmarking some annual funds for country activities

In Media



JAIPUR, February 29, 2012

## Jaipur group to anchor World Bank initiative

Sunny Sebastian

A World Bank Institute initiative in good governance and accountability, Community of Practice on Social Accountability (CoPSA) in South Asia will be launched in Colombo, Sri Lanka this Wednesday. CUTS (Consumer Utility and Trust Society), a Jaipur-based civil society organisation, has been entrusted with the task of anchoring the programme in South Asian countries by the Affiliated Network on Social Accountability – South Asia Region (ANSA-SAR) based in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

“Several civil society organizations in various South Asian countries and across the world have experience in executing the tools of social accountability. These tools are known as low-cost techniques, which can leverage \$1000 million programmes by spending \$20 million and improve service delivery for the beneficiaries,” observes Roland Lomme, Governance Advisor of the World Bank, India Country Management Unit, New Delhi.

Defining the concept of community of practice, George Cheriyan, Director, CUTS International, informs that it is a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better through regular interaction within the group. “It is a group having an identity defined by a shared domain of interest, having mutual relationships that enable them to learn from each other and the members who are practitioners,” he adds.

CoPSA will bring together people from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and India.

The initiative is in the context of poor transparency and accountability jeopardizing most of the development efforts in South Asian countries. It is pointed out that social accountability is derived as a mechanism to empower citizens so that they may demand accountability from the authorities in power, or in other words, it is an approach towards building accountability through civic engagement.

“CoPSA is a strategy to create linkages between different actors, practitioners of social accountability for knowledge exchange, mobilizing innovation and new ideas and using this knowledge and innovation to advance the practices and action on the ground,” Naimur Rehman, Chief Operating Officer of ANSA-SAR points out. “This investment is made because of the realisation of the need to anchor such emerging practices and learning from each other,” Mr. Cheriyan observes.

“This mechanism consists of many approaches and tools related to performance monitoring by the community, participatory financial management and development effectiveness,” he adds.

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