Building a Responsive Governance Ecosystem: Reflections from Select Social Accountability Experiments in India

Affiliated Network for Social Accountability
South Asian Region

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India**

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ANSA-SAR	Affiliated Network for Social Accountability- South Asia Region
ANM	Auxiliary Nurse Midwife
ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
ATRTE	Audit the Right to Education
BDO	Block Development Officer
CART	Consumer Action, Research and Training Center
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CCD	Community Care Development
CCSC	Climate change community scorecard
CFBT	The Centre for British Teacher
CMAT	Citizen Monitoring and Audit Teams
CRC	Citizen Report Cards
CREDA	The Centre for Rural Education and Development Action
CSC	Community Score Card
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CUTS	Consumer Unity and Trust Society
ECMRR	Enabling Community Monitoring of Rural Roads
GOI	Government of India
GVT	*Gramin Vikas* Trust
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
IRC	Information Resource Centre
JKP	*Jana Kalyan Pratistan*
KBK	Kalahandi-Bolangir-Koraput
LEAF	Leadership through Education and Action Foundation
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
MIS	Management Information System
MP	Madhya Pradesh
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NREGS	National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
NRHM	National Rural Health Mission

NRRDA	National Rural Roads Development Agency
OBC	Other Backward Caste
ORD	Organisation Rural Development
OSSRA	Odisha State Rural Road Agency
PAC	Public Affairs Centre
PAD	People's Action for Development
PDS	Public distribution System
PMGSY	*Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana*
PR I	*Panchayati Raj* Institution
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PWD	Public Works Department
RTE	Right to Education
RTI	Right to Information
SA	Social Accountability
SC	Scheduled Caste
SMC	School Management Committee
SHG	Self Help Group
SSA	*Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*
ST	Scheduled Tribes
SWF	Social Watch Facilitators
SWG	Social Watch Groups
VDAC	Village Development Action Committees
YSD	Youth for Social Development

Executive summary

Accounts on the performance of India's flagship social welfare programme resemble for most part a walk through a tunnel of unrelieved gloom. They are an extended syllable of dolor --- corruption, official apathy, inefficiency, ignorance and resource misappropriation. The stories run along these expectedly dark lines like crow's feet across the nation's poorest villages and communities.

At the same time the experience of OneWorld Foundation India, which produced these reports, shows that grim as the stories are, they are not without their silver edges of hope. Even the poorest of poor people, subjected to decades of social tyranny, can stand up on their unsteady legs and fight for their rights if they are adequately armed with education and empowering tools like the Right to Education Act or Right to Information Act for this unequal battle.

Contained in these reports are stories based not on forlorn observations but real participation. They document in great detail the experience of NGOs, which educated and empowered the poorest and most backward and together with them fought many hard battles for justice, a few successfully. As much as exposing the appalling state of social welfare programs like MGNREHA and /National Rural Health Mission/ (/NRHM/), their experiences reveal strategies that may yet hold out hope for their salvation. These are the real gains of their diligent labour.

The work of the social groups proves that the climb for India's downtrodden is uphill even treacherous, but by no means impossible. With strategies designed specially to suit the dynamics of each community and its socio-economic context, it is possible to engineer positive change. It's painful but possible. Their work shows that the fruits of grand social programmes do not reach their intended beneficiaries not only because of rampant corruption and an oppressive social order but also because of ignorance and managerial incompetence. Through their work, an often frustrating trial-and-error process of deploying a series of techniques, the groups succeeded in evolving approaches that finally worked. And that is the light at the end of the tunnel.

The work of the researchers contained in these reports show that it is important to rub life into the benumbed spirits of people at the bottom of the heap and educate, empower and prepare them to fight. These may initially be tiny and scattered knots of people, but when they stand up and win. It's only a matter of time before their friends, neighbours, communities and societies follow. This, one must hope, would set off a tide that eventually changes the times.

Early results from these projects provide encouragement and reflect the need to capture their experiential learning through a methodical study towards enriching the body of knowledge on the social accountability discourse and for raising the overall awareness and profile of social accountability work both regionally and globally.

The objective of this research oriented study is to understand the social accountability approaches and outcomes, and develop knowledge resources to be harnessed in mainstreaming governance accountability of public institutions of India.

This report presents the key findings of the study and emphasizes on the appropriateness of particular social accountability approaches in given political and socio-cultural contexts, highlights factors that both encourage and limit the level of participation in social accountability exercises, assesses the role of information in empowering citizens, service-providers and strengthening their engagement, and presents key challenges in deploying social accountability activities.

The case studies are as much about what has not worked as about what does and can work. The knowledge contained in them could help governments in India to ensure that their social welfare budgets are better spent, reach the intended beneficiaries and help in lifting large masses of people across the country above the poverty line.

The encouraging results from these projects, yet in the early years of some forward-looking legislations and schemes justify their audit, so as to say, to create an enriching body of knowledge on the social accountability discourse in India.

The OneWorld team visited the work done by organizations that throws up a host of practical ideas for engineering change, tried and tested out in real time with real people and in real contexts. The reports underline the need to think out of the box and yet advocate for entitlements even under harsh circumstances. In doing so, it demonstrates the need for agencies to be flexible to be able to successfully intervene in social welfare programs. Besides, it also throws the spotlight on the need to review and modify approaches through the course of their projects.

Collectively the reports are a tome of referential knowledge, a clinic if you like, on how to implement large welfare programs at the grassroots level in highly challenging, complex and inhospitable environments characterized by gaping social disparities.

Contents

Introduction

About This Report

Strengthening transparency and accountability in governance is recognised as a necessity for achieving development outcomes. While large scale attention has been paid to strengthening the supply side of accountability, the last decade has witnessed enhanced focus on the deficiencies existing in the demand side of accountability in governance. In this context, the Social Accountability (SA) approach was introduced to engage citizens in governance processes, to develop a sense of ownership and enable them to seek accountability. Social accountability tools enable citizens to engage with governments in a constructive, meaningful way by using evidence based analysis and advocacy. Through SA methods, a direct accountability relationship between citizens and state can be established.

The Affiliated Network for Social Accountability - South Asia Region (ANSA - SAR), supported by the World Bank Institute, aims to promote, strengthen and sustain social accountability knowledge and praxis by facilitating citizen efforts of holding public institutions accountable in terms of delivering public services. Increasing the capacity of civil society organisations and public institutions in the South Asia region to promote, initiate and undertake social accountability interventions is one of the key objectives of ANSA-SAR. The network aims to achieve this through (i) provisioning of project grants to civil society organisations, (ii) training and skill building of both state and civil society institutions, and (iii) conducting and disseminating research to advance the field of social accountability.

ANSA-SAR has so far disbursed grants to 22 civil society organisations from Bangladesh (2), India (12), Nepal (1), Pakistan (4), and Sri Lanka (3). The objectives of these projects span from mainstreaming the Right to Information Act (RTI) and ensuring social accountability to promoting good governance, guaranteeing food and livelihood security,   and improving delivery of basic public services. For achieving these aims, the projects are using diverse SA tools like the Citizen Report Cards (CRCs), Community Score Cards (CSCs), Public Expenditure Tracking Survey, Social Audit, Social Watch Group (SWG) and the Right to Information (RTI).

The early results from these projects are very encouraging and reflect the need to capture their experiential learning through a methodical study towards enriching the body of knowledge on the social accountability discourse and for raising the overall awareness and profile of social accountability work both regionally and globally. For this purpose, in December 2011, ANSA-SAR collaborated with OneWorld Foundation India to study and document innovative practices adopted in 9 of the 12 social accountability projects that it supports in India. The objective of this research oriented study is to understand the Social Accountability approaches and outcomes, and develop knowledge resources to be harnessed in mainstreaming governance accountability of public institutions of India.

This report presents the key findings of the study and emphasises on the appropriateness of particular SA approaches in given political and socio-cultural contexts, highlights factors that both encourage and limit the level of participation in SA exercises, assesses the role of information in empowering citizens, service-providers and strengthening their engagement, and presents key challenges in deploying SA activities.

ANSA-SAR Partners Identified for the Study

Partner	SA Approach/Thematic Focus	Location
Adhar	*Community Score Card, Citizen Report Card* and *Right to Information* to introduce reforms in service delivery under MGNREGA and PDS.	Odisha
Centre for Civil Society	*Social Audit* to ensure provision of elementary education aligned to the requirements of the *Right to Education Act.*	Rajasthan
Centre for Rural Education and Development Action	*Right to Information* and constructive engagement to empower people about their legal entitlements under NREGS.	Uttar Pradesh
Consumer Unity and Trust Society	*Public Expenditure Tracking Survey* method to improve public expenditure outcomes in National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.	Rajasthan
Jan Sahas Social Development Society	*Citizen Report Card, Public Expenditure Tracking* and *Social Audit* to improve service delivery in education and health services schemes of the government.	Madhya Pradesh
Leadership through Education and Action Foundation Society	Leveraging *Right to Information* to empower marginalized citizens.	Tamil Nadu
Public Affairs Centre	*Community Score Card* utilised to enhance environmental governance of coastal areas of Gulf of Mannar.	Tamil Nadu
SAMBANDH	*Independent Budget Analysis* and *Public Expenditure Tracking* to ensure transparency in NREGS.	Odisha
Youth for Social Development	*Citizen Report Card* to strengthen transparency in bidding and construction processes of rural road projects.	Odisha

ADHAR: Promotion of Social Accountability Through Citizens' Action

ADHAR, an NGO based in Bolangir district, Odisha, engages with the rural communities and government to introduce social accountability tools with the aim of implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and Public Distribution System (PDS) in the region. In April 2010, ADHAR designed an elaborate mechanism to leverage Community Score

Cards (CSC), Citizen Report Cards (CRC) and Right to Information (RTI) for monitoring progress of the two crucial national schemes. Each tool served a special purpose - CRC was used to identify issues in scheme implementation, RTI was to access relevant information and CSC fostered civic engagement by organising interface meetings. Feedback gathered from the exercise was utilised to exact accountability from service providers in the region.

Proven outcomes include increase in level of community awareness about the schemes, responsiveness of service provider and reforms in service delivery.

Centre for Civil Society: Audit The Right to Education

In 2011, with an aim to reform the school education system and advance ideas enshrined in the Right to Education in Kota district, Rajasthan, the Centre for Civil Society (CCS) launched the Audit the Right to Education project. The organisation adopts a unique top-down approach to secure the participation of service providers (government agencies) and local communities in the social accountability process. The uniqueness of CCS's approach lies in the importance given to ensuring support from important high level government representatives. Upon establishing this relationship with the government, it was easier for CCS to interact with local officials and the community.

Such an approach is reinforcing the role of active citizen monitoring in the evaluation of public services, improving awareness level of community members and training them to assess the level of service delivery.

Centre for Rural Education and Development Action (Creda): Empowering Rural People to Seek their Entitlements under Mgnrega

The Centre for Rural Education and Development Action (CREDA) started a SA project in February 2010 in 30 *gram panchayats* (locally elected, village self-governance councils) of Halia block in Mirzapur district to empower particularly the poor and marginalised people to secure their livelihoods and food requirements under MGNREGA. In order to do this, CREDA has built the capacity of 60 village level youth volunteers and 100 members of women Self-help Groups (SHGs). Thirty village level committees have also been formed for helping people to seek employment under MGNREGA without facing corruption and harassment.

An important part of the project is the preparation of a database of families deprived of their entitlements under MGNREGA and documentation of case studies and experiences. So far, CREDA has directly benefited nearly 7000 workers across 99 villages under thirty *gram panchayats* in the block.

Consumer Unity and Trust Society: Developing Culture of Good Governance and Accountability

As a response to the deficiencies in MGNREGA implementation in Rajasthan, the Consumer Action, Research and Training (CART) center at Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS) initiated a social accountability project in 2010 to facilitate Community Score Cards (CSC) exercises to improve MGNREGA implementation. The intervention focused on a state wide execution by devising a pyramidical implementation structure. Master trainers were trained at the state level to provide trainings to 66 Civil Society Organisation (CSO) facilitators intended to mobilise community and conduct CSC exercises. CART leveraged its own network, and ensured that the *panchayats* met the preconditions necessary for successful CSC exercises.

Through this project, CART has proven the possibility of implementing a large scale social accountability intervention by conducting CSC exercises in 66 *gram panchayats*. The feedback received through the CSC exercises is being used to advocate for reforms at the state level and institutionalise CSC as an accountability mechanism in government projects.

Jan Sahas Social Development Society: People'S Initiative for Accountability and Transparency in Health and Education

The Jan Sahas Development Society launched the People's Initiative for Accountability and Transparency in Health and Education in 2010 in Dewas and Ujjain districts of Madhya Pradesh to bring changes in health and education status of these two districts. Social accountability tools of community score card, social audit, budget tracking, public hearings and RTI are being utilised in the project to demand transparency and accountability from the government in *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan* (SSA, is a federal government-initiated campaign for total literacy in the country) and National Rural Health Mission implementation. In order to do this, the project employs a four pronged strategy of mobilisation and awareness generation, enlistment of community participation, capacity building and institutional strengthening, and advocacy efforts with government as well as the civil society.

As of March 2012, 16 community score card exercises, 1 social audit, 12 budget tracking exercises and 2 interface meetings have been organised under the project. Various training modules have been developed and workshops organised for capacity building of government officials at district, block and *panchayat* levels. This has resulted in gradual improvements in the implementation of both the schemes.

Leadership through Education and Action Foundation Society: Increasing Negotiating Capacities through Right to Information

The Leadership through Education and Action Foundation (LEAF) has introduced a capacity building project to increase the negotiating power of marginalized population for better governance in Namakkal district, Tamil Nadu. LEAF is empowering people by training them on use of RTI act as a tool to slowly remedy the institutional governance. A baseline survey conducted by the organisation revealed that people were mostly unaware of such legislation. To implement the project, LEAF concentrated on mass awareness campaigns, local community mobilisation techniques such as folk songs/plays to introduce people to RTI.

Towards the end of the project, LEAF assisted people with filing approximately 1500 applications. There has been a visible increase in people's awareness about RTI, their understanding of the provisions of the law and its importance in improving public service delivery.

Public Affairs Centre: Enhancing Community Centered Governance in Climate Change Affected Coastal Areas

Public Affairs Centre (PAC) aims at reducing the impact of climatic vagaries on the lives of coastal communities in the Gulf of Mannar region in Tamil Nadu, by adopting a citizen centric approach that synergises the efforts of the government and the local community. The intervention is premised on following a social accountability process that employs climate change community score cards (CCSC) as a tool to integrate a community perspective into environmental governance. Since 2010, PAC is playing a crucial role in elevating local strategies of adaptation and survival into the framework of governance by building local capacity in engaging with government. .

In view of making the governance system responsive to local needs and facilitating an effective redress to people's grievances, the organisation is working at directing the focus of policy making towards the climate change threatened communities.

Sambandh: Social Watch Group for Social Accountability and Governance

In 2010, Sambandh initiated a pilot called Social Watch Group for Social Accountability and Governance with the aim of institutionalising the demand side of accountability for quality

implementation of government programmes, in particular MGNREGA, in the Thakurmunda block of Mayurbhanj district in Odisha. An inclusive strategy was adopted to empower the community in a sustained manner. A Social Watch Group, comprising of representatives from the community, Self Help Groups (SHGs), *Panchayati Raj* Institutions (PRIs, related to the governance of *Panchayats*), media and officials from line departments, was formed to continuously mobilise the community. Rural Call Centres were established to bridge the existing information gap on government schemes. In this manner, Sambandh has developed four *gram panchayats* as models for others to replicate its features and performances.

Thus far, the most pronounced impact of the project is reflected in the increase in level of community awareness on rights and entitlements on MGNREGA.

Youth for Social Development: Enabling Community Monitoring of Rural Road Projects

Youth for Social Development (YSD), a not-for-profit independent social research and development organisation in Odisha, initiated a project February 2011 to improve road infrastructure in remotest blocks of Gajapati district, Raigada and Gosani, with the participation of local communities. YSD applies a participatory approach to improve road connectivity in its operational areas and utilises social accountability tools such as Right to Information (RTI), citizen reporting, citizen monitoring and procurement monitoring. Citizen monitors form the backbone of the project. Till date, a total of 32 members have been trained as monitors and 18 out of 20 roads (6 roads in Gosani and 12 roads in Raigada) have been successfully monitored. In this manner, YSD has fostered accountability mechanisms in Gajapati district by creating platforms for community to dialogue with government functionaries using RTI and resolve corruption in the infrastructural development of the region.

Research Methodology

Focus

The nine projects identified for documentation apply a wide spectrum of social accountability tools - from leveraging citizens' Right to Information to conducting social audits of the provisions under the Act. The case studies elaborate on the processes of introducing and implementing the SA approach in each of these initiatives, and describe the challenges in implementing those approaches. Further, the outcomes of the projects have been studied after identifying the measurable indicators with regard to the objectives of the project.

Approach

The OneWorld team undertook a research oriented approach for this appraisal and documentation of ANSA supported initiatives. Action-oriented, participatory and applied research methods were used in pursuance of this research effort.

- Action-Oriented: Case studies focus on the *how to* and *for what purpose* of the project efforts. In this way, the actionable objective of the study shapes the way in which data is collected.
- Participatory: There are a number of stakeholders engaged in implementation. In order to fully understand the functionality and impact of the successful practice, these stakeholders have been accommodated and incorporated into the learning exchange process.
- Applied: Case studies are written with the intention of knowledge exchange for replication. For this reason, emphasis has been on strategy oriented documentation, supported through qualitative and quantitative analysis (inclusion of visual aids - graphs, photos, and tables).

Secondary Research

Secondary research was completed with reference to international, regional and local material:

- *Scholarly government reports, working papers, and case studies* - to ensure a holistic understanding of social accountability theories, tools and practice.

- *Respected media sources* - to develop general knowledge of the socio-political context of the issues surrounding the identified projects

- *Progress Reports of Projects* - to gain basic understanding of the project approach, stakeholders and thematic focus.

Primary Research

Primary research was conducted over the phone and through visits to the sites of implementation. Field visits consisted of focus group discussions with central actors, observations of use by beneficiaries, and semi-structured interviews and surveys of key stakeholders. The goal was to reflect on the successes and failures of practices in social accountability, collect data (qualitative and quantitative) to this end, and document results to bring about a change or improvement in the service, and/or encourage its replication elsewhere.

- *Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):* FGDs have been used as an entry tool to collecting qualitative data from central stakeholders. Focus groups were facilitated by one or two researchers with 5-10 community members. Researchers employed broad focus areas under which they determined questions for the users.

- *Interviews:* Key stakeholders were contacted through formal emails and followed-up over phone. Interview questions were prepared at the desk and designed based on secondary research. Questions were generated to fill gaps in understanding and to expand knowledge in focus areas.

- *Survey Questions:* Content, Scope and Purpose - Surveys contained dichotomous questions (yes/no) and questions based on level of measurement (i.e. scale 1-10). Dichotomous questions were followed up by filter/contingency questions (i.e. If yes, then…) in order to determine reasons for outcomes.

The qualitative and quantitative information gathered during field visit was subsequently analysed and the facts emerging out this analysis were factored in to derive learning on key issues of programme approach and innovations, challenges and opportunities, and the project's impact on the citizens *vis-à-vis* its objectives.

Limitations of the Study

While this research effort throws light on some key SA issues- appropriateness of tools, preconditions for success, potential impact, challenges and sustainability of SA efforts-certain limitations were encountered during the study. These limitations are highlighted below:

- In some cases, the sample size for the study was relatively small given the vastly dispersed geographical location of the coverage area of concerned SA projects and availability of stakeholders. For this reason, these findings cannot be generalised to the broader SA framework on the basis of this study alone. However, these findings highlight certain important implementation trends and present important lessons to be learnt in deploying social accountability projects.

- The research team had language proficiency in Hindi, Oriya, Tamil and English so discussions with the implementing agencies and community members were not a problem; however, some of the project areas involved communities using local dialects, to understand which, help of the

local workers of the implementing agencies had to be sought. Therefore, while primary research familiarised the research team with ground realities and helped them to contextually locate their study, local language barriers may have resulted in omission of certain valuable experiences of the community. Findings have, thus, been presented by factoring in these limitations.

- Given that these projects are in their initial stages and have just completed their grant period, it is difficult to assess their long term impact. Hence, the most immediate reforms in governance that resulted from these initiatives were reviewed to correlate with the SA approach. In specific, improvements in citizen's participation, availability of information and citizen-state interactions are emphasised.

Key Findings

In India, newer development approaches are being institutionalised by the government to achieve the ideal of decentralised democracy and bring in major reforms in the process of service delivery. Most recent policy directives are increasingly emphasising on people-centric and demand-driven development interventions. The crucial preconditions for the successful ground level implementation of these citizen-centric policies include increased citizen awareness and involvement in governance processes, and continuous and effective citizen-government engagement.

However, in India, neither citizen participation nor government accountability has been mainstreamed effectively into a continuous engagement. Lack of trust in government representatives has created a gap in the interactions between the citizens and the state, and thereby a sense of alienation among people. Hence, there is an urgent need to deepen the level of citizen engagement and feedback in the governance of the country and bolster the demand side of accountability which can then act as a pressure on the supply side.

The SA projects, supported by ANSA-SAR in India, are endeavouring to close this accountability gap in the country by making citizens aware of their entitlements under major national schemes like the MGNREGA, PDS, National Rural Health Mission, Right to Education, and their legal Right to Information (RTI) and by training and familiarising them with various social accountability tools that they can utilise for extracting such accountability from the government. This research has attempted to study the varying degrees of success achieved by these projects and presents reasons for the same.

This section highlights cross-cutting issues on social accountability that have emerged and discusses the key lessons learned from the implementation experiences of nine social accountability projects supported by ANSA-SAR in India.

Securing Adequate Levels of Awareness and Mobilising Participation

Field findings suggest that awareness at the grassroots level regarding the various commitments of the government towards its citizens is highly deficient. Focus group discussions (FGDs) with diverse communities across the country revealed that the local population is ill-informed about their basic entitlements under the law. Often, the absence of this information highly limits their ability to demand accountability from the service providers. Given this, the primary objective for any SA project should be to familiarise the local community with their rights and entitlements and the processes involved in exercising them.

This process of mobilising community support is a long drawn and time consuming effort as confirmed by the experience of all nine projects. Most of these social accountability projects required approximately more than a year to develop basic awareness within the communities about government schemes. Even today, when these projects have engaged communities in social accountability exercises, there is still vast scope and need for strengthening community awareness and familiarising them with government procedures.

This need is highlighted by the low levels of participation in accountability exercises. Communities have to be mobilised continuously over a period of time and convinced about the utility and importance of demanding accountability from their service providers.

Social accountability projects need to dedicate substantial time for a detailed awareness generation and dedicated community mobilisation effort.

Establishing Partnerships with Local Community Based Organisations

For any social accountability project to be successful, it needs to be accepted by the community. This acceptance is based on several informal factors, primary amongst which is the goodwill that the project implementing agency shares with the community. The pathway to this relationship of trust and goodwill is through the establishment of networks with community based organisations (CBOs) as local partners. Typically, such CBOs have years of experience working with the community and are familiar with local opportunities and constraints. This experience and familiarity should be leveraged to build a relationship with the community for their sustained interest and involvement in the project.

Field findings suggest that projects in which ANSA-SAR partners established alliances with CBOs have achieved greater successes in getting community support as well as in establishing a rapport with service providers. In some cases, these CBOs are working in direct connection with the community, in others a pool of trained village or community leaders are being used by as entry points into the community. On the other hand, efforts at direct intervention by primary project implementers are facing problems of connecting with the community that is resulting in extensive delays and limited participation in implementing social accountability exercises.

CBOs can act as local champions for the accountability cause because they have a more regular and deeper contact with the community and local service providers; their experience and expertise can play a crucial role in determining the appropriateness of an initiative and its pursuit in a given context. They can play a key role in acting as a link between the government and the community, and facilitating an enhanced interaction between the two which is a crucial prerequisite for any social accountability project.

Acquiring the Support of Service Providers

For any social accountability project to be successful, it is crucial for both the demand and supply side of accountability to engage, interact and participate collectively in social accountability exercises. While preparing the community to demand accountability is the first step, any movement forward depends largely on the support extended by service providers and their active involvement in the project.

The absence of such support can vastly undermine the community's confidence and interest in a social accountability project. Hence, it becomes vital to devise strategies for making service providers cooperate in the project. This is a challenging exercise since it demands transparent reforms in their work processes, attitude and commitment. The way forward could be through assistance from CBOs and by identification of a set of pro-reforms personnel within the government and making them active participants in the social accountability project from the first stage.

In most of the nine projects, the involvement of government officials in accountability exercises is considerably low. This is a major limiting factor to the potential and sustainability of these efforts. It is important to develop a medium that can engage citizens to channel their concerns and grievances into a productive dialogue with the state. The emphasis here should be on constructive engagement and not a confrontational.

Use of Contextually Appropriate Social Accountability Tools

The basic implementation strategy for any social accountability effort entails the active involvement of the communities. It is difficult to engage local communities in discussions on the larger questions of accountability without adapting the intervention into the local context. Social accountability initiatives primarily target communities that are constituted of economically and socially marginalized sections of population whose daily lives are deeply intertwined with local social and economic power structures.

Field findings suggest that majority of the target population of these nine projects included daily wage laborers. This pattern of livelihood makes it challenging for community members to extend their maximum support and time to the intervention. Livelihood insecurities combine with pressures of illiteracy and social exclusion in the case of dalits (traditionally, considered untouchables, dalits belong to the lowest strata in the Hindu caste system), women, elderly, the physically and visually handicapped and language barriers to severely limit the channels of active community participation in accountability efforts.

These contextualised challenges have to be factored in while tailoring a social accountability project. The processes of information gathering and dissemination have to be simple and informal and should be done through local channels like CBOs and community leaders. Accountability exercises should be open to ground level changes in order to accommodate diverse economic and social needs. Simpler social accountability exercises like CSCs should be utilised as they involve easy procedures and result in quick and visible outcomes that can be a highly motivating factor for the community.

This research also confirms that the appropriate combination of various social accountability tools like CRCs, CSCs, and RTI at various stages of the intervention can strengthen project implementation by serving designated purposes over a course of time.

Moving from Short-Term Goals Towards Long-Term Reforms

Establishing a framework for social accountability in governance is a gradual process that takes a considerable amount of time. The combination of this fact with the stage of implementation at which these projects are makes it difficult to highlight concrete tangible results. However, during the last two years that these projects have been operational, improvements have been seen in citizen awareness levels, service providers' willingness to support reforms, the engagement levels between citizens and the government, and in the delivery of public services.

Through constant engagement with the community, ANSA-SAR partners have been able to create a pool of informed citizenry that are aware of their basic rights and entitlements and of ways to demand better governance. As a result, local communities are more confident of approaching service providers and collectively express their concerns. Such collective bargaining has resulted in improvements in the ground level implementation of schemes like MGNREGA, PDS, RTE, NRHM and RTI. The main achievement has been that citizens have a platform and channel to express their grievances, make their voices heard and contribute towards developing action plans for addressing concerns of accountability in governance.

This interaction between communities and service providers has resulted in highlighting larger questions of the need for systemic changes and government processes reengineering. The ultimate success of social accountability projects depends on the degree to which they are able to address these larger questions. Hence, the experience of these projects points toward the need for every social accountability project to define an initial scope of operation and move gradually from short term achievable and visible goals towards long term systemic reforms.

Institutionalising Social Accountability Concepts and Tools

The social accountability projects have collected a strong database on ground level realities and challenges faced in governance at the local level across the country. This database can provide valuable insights into handling the most challenging governance issues in situations of extreme economic and social deprivation. Given this, it is crucial to channel this information in the right direction and conduct appropriate and timely advocacy exercises for dissemination of these findings. Though the ANSA-SAR projects in India have conducted such advocacy efforts with officials from higher levels of administration, these efforts have been scattered with limited results.

It is therefore important to cover this lacuna because larger questions of accountability depend on the development of appropriate solutions to address these local concerns and action at the state level. Most of these projects are adopting a bottom up approach to accountability, wherein they are preparing the communities and local service providers. However, such an approach reaches a saturation point where the support of higher level officials and institutions of state is required for the project to move forward, a point where it becomes crucial to achieve tangible outcomes.

The possibility of developing top-down administrative capacity for supporting accountability efforts should be explored. Local level administrators are often not equipped with sufficient resources, skills and power to introduce accountability reforms. This can be addressed by capacitating state level officials and institutionalising social accountability mechanisms in existing government procedures wherein stringent reporting requirements and safeguards are established for monitoring the implementation of all essential government schemes right up till the local level. This top-down intitutionalisation will interplay with localised bottom-up accountability exercises to inculcate a long term culture of accountability in government operations along with yielding immediate improvements in service delivery.

CASE STUDY 1

Promotion of Social Accountability
Through Citizen's Action

Introduction

The Government of India has introduced comprehensive social security programmes to address major concerns of livelihood and food security. Pioneering efforts include the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), a law guaranteeing hundred days of wage-employment every year to a rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The Public Distribution System (PDS), meant to provide subsidised food to the poor is another initiative.

However, such large programmes are often subjected to systemic fraud and corruption that prevent the benefits from reaching the intended beneficiaries. Moreover, lack of awareness regarding entitlement among beneficiaries

Intervention	Community Scorecard, Citizen Report Card and Right to Information
Location	Bolangir, Odisha
Organisation	ADHAR
Sector	Livelihood and Food Security
Target	Rural
Audience	Households, MGNREGA beneficiaries
Geographic	Five blocks in
Scope	Bolangir, Odisha

restricts them from holding service providers accountable. The lack of political will combined with limited capacity of beneficiaries often proves to be detrimental to the development outcomes. Keeping this in mind, emphasis has recently shifted to devising monitoring mechanisms that can bring transparency in implementation and at the same time strengthen community involvement.

ADHAR, a Bolangir-based NGO, has engaged with rural communities and the government to introduce social accountability tools for strengthening implementation of MGNREGA and PDS. An elaborate mechanism was designed to leverage Community Scorecard (CSC), Citizen Report Cards (CRC) and Right to Information (RTI) for monitoring progress of the two crucial national schemes. Each tool served a special purpose. CRC was used to identify issues, RTI was to access relevant information and CSC fostered civic engagement through interface meetings. Feedback gathered from the exercise was utilised to make service providers accountable.

Thus far, 17 CSC exercises have been conducted. Proven outcomes include increase in the level of community awareness, responsiveness of service providers and reforms in service delivery. Main achievement under MGNREGA has been remarkable improvement in the worksite facilities. Similarly, quality and quantity of food supplies have seen an improvement in PDS. ADHAR's social accountability intervention proves the relevance of CSCs in achieving immediate visible improvements in service delivery at the village level. Although finding support from service providers remains a challenge, continuous sensitisation is needed to engage the government.

Context

Bolangir, a part of the socially and economically deprived Kalahandi-Bolangir-Koraput (KBK) region of Odisha, suffers from persistent drought, starvation deaths and distress migration. Systemic corruption and fraud impede implementation to the extent that the community does not receive any benefits. Combined with low awareness levels, lack of

political will and limited administrative support, development schemes have a less-than-desired impact. Such conditions make it critical to devise a strategy to enhance development effectiveness by building accountability mechanisms.

To address these shortcomings, ADHAR worked with rural communities and government officials to pilot a social accountability initiative to promote a culture of good governance. The project aimed at leveraging the CSC, CRC and RTI to monitor the implementation of MGNREGA and the PDS across 70 villages in 10 *panchayats* covering five blocks in the district. (A *panchayat* is the term for locally elected, village self-governance councils, whose administrative jurisdiction is congruous to the geography of village or villages they represent. *Panchayats* are recognised as the third tier of government by law in India.)

Name of Block	Total *Gram Panchayats*	Total Villages
Bolangir (Sadar)	02	15
Khaprakhol	02	16
Tureikela	02	12
Titlagarh	02	13
Saintala	02	14
Total	**10 GPs**	**70**

Table 1: Profile of ADHAR's project coverage area
Source: ADHAR

MGNREGA seeks to address the issue of unemployment by guaranteeing 100 days of employment in a year to an adult in every rural household. The PDS aims at providing food security to India's poor by distributing essential food supplies (wheat, rice and sugar) and non-food items (kerosene) at subsidised rates. However, execution of MGNREGA suffers from multiple problems including enlisting non-existing beneficiaries, poor work-site facilities, delay in payment of wages and assigning work[1]. Likewise, in the case of PDS, beneficiaries often receive irregular, inadequate and poor quality of food grains.

Through its intervention, ADHAR is collecting community feedback on the local implementation of MGNREGA and PDS and using the information to exact responsiveness from

[1]These problems were identified through ADHAR's CRC exercise where it surveyed community members and government officials in relation to MGNREGA, keeping in mind factors like awareness, accessibility, working environment, mode of payment and satisfaction.

service providers. Initially, to gain valuable participation, the focus was to increase the awareness among communities about their legal entitlements and empower them to demand their rights. At the same time, government functionaries were sensitised to participate in CSC.
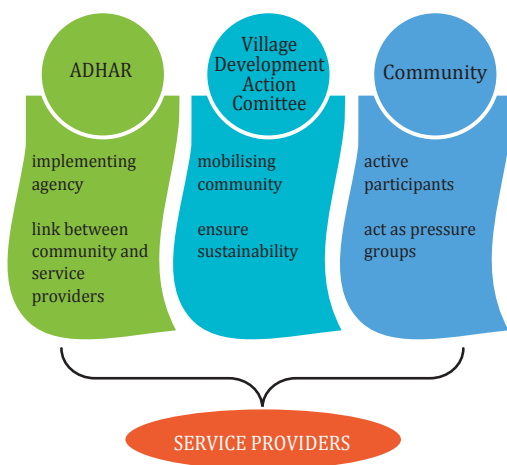
Stakeholders

Figure 1: Interplay of the various stakeholders involved in the implementation strategy of ADHAR's project

Social Accountability Process

Beginning April 2010, CSC, CRC and RTI tools were utilised in the initiative. The rationale for using varied tools was to ensure holistic approach in implementation. RTI was used to gather information from the government on entitlements, CRC helped in understanding the quality of service delivery, and CSC facilitated interaction between the community and service providers to develop an action plan to resolve concerns. Although, all three tools are valuable, the CSC yields immediate results in terms of holding government accountable. In addition, the scorecard is relatively easy to use in rural communities as the facilitator often relies upon informal discussions for ranking problems. Moreover, meetings can be scheduled based on availability of communities-that is in a manner that they do not interfere with their livelihood activities.

BASIC ELEMENTS OF COMMUNITY SCORE CARDS

- Unit- Community
- Meant for local level
- Information is collected through focus group discussions
- Emphasis on immediate feedback and accountability.
- Short implementation time

Source: world bank

Considering the local socio-economic environment, ADHAR followed a simple and pragmatic approach to familiarise and capacitate the community to take forward concepts of accountability. It was assessed that leaders at village level would be beneficial to continuously mobilising and making people aware of the benefits of involving themselves in the exercise.

Village level leaders

ADHAR formed Village Development Action Committees (VDAC) in each village comprising 10 to 12 young men and women with basic levels of literacy and knowledge of governance from which one member is selected as president and another as vice president. These members were given comprehensive training to assume their responsibility of interacting with the stakeholders and spreading awareness. Being a part of the village, they usually command inherent trust and find it easier to build rapport. Till date 14 VDACs have been formed in respective villages.

Designing Score Cards

VDACs collect data on government schemes and train villagers to request for such information through RTI. For this purpose, VDACs hold 'mobile clinics' to disseminate information on the RTI process and help people utilise the information to demand accountability. Acquired details were valuable in tracking inputs for the scorecards. Each scorecard consists of measurable indicators to assess the actual performance of the schemes against the legal benchmarks. For instance, MGNREGA is marked on parameters like worksite facilities, status of wages, and performance of the responsible authority.

Conducting Score Card Exercise

VDAC members then held meetings and conducted focused group discussions to assess the the scheme on each of the parameters on the score cards. Villagers collectively attribute a score on a scale of 0-to-10 (0 indicates no provision and 10 indicates full provision) to each parameter.

The next step is the interface meeting between the community and government officials and the preparation of an action plan on the basis of the results of the interface meeting. This process is facilitated by VDAC members with guidance from ADHAR project staff, who collectively ensured that meetings were carried out in a professional manner and with the participation from all stakeholders.

MGNREGS Project: Road Construction Location: Ghusuradungri Village, Bodipali Panchayat		
	Community	Government
Labour Payment	4/10	10/10
Daily Payment	10/10	10/10
Drinkig Water	10/10	10/10
Gram Sathi's Wage	10/10	10/10
Shelter (i.e. dhurri, tent etc)	2/10	0/10
First Aid	6/10	10/10
Creche (arèa for children)	0/10	10/10

Table 2: Marks allocated by the community and government during a CSC exercise to monitor a road construction project under MGNREGA in Ghusuradungri village, Bodipali *Panchayat*

Source: ADHAR

ADHAR'S Implementation Strategy

Imput Tracking
- Collecting information on scheme from government sources
- Carrying out an exercise to fill the Citizen Report Cards to identify issues in program implementation
- Filing Right to Information requests to extract scheme related information from service providers.

Building the projec team
- Selection of youth cadres on the basis of basic literacy, understanding of governance issues and commitment to social work.
- Training the staff on project concept, social accountability, RTI, MGNREGA and PDS
- Creation of Village Development Action Committees (VDAC) for facilitating mentoring process

Awareness generatio and empowerment of vulnerable groups
- Sharing information with the community thought village level meeting
- Educating the community on the CSC process and filing RTI
- Orientation meetings for local level government officials and PRI functionaries on the CSC process through workshops.

Self evaluation of performance by service providers
- Making local government officials mark and justify their own performance on various parameters related to scheme implementation.

Community scoring exercise
- Conducting focus group discussions of the community
- Community marking of the schemes on the same arameters as used by service providers.
- Identification of gap areas, reasons for those gaps and responsible authorities

Interface meeting between the community and service providers
- The community and government offcials meet, share their scores and discuss the reasons to explain for the scores
- Discrepancies are identified and solutions are determined

Preparation of Action Plan
- Interface meetings conclude with a form al action plan.
- Solutions are identified for eery problem and allocated to responsible authorities.
- Continous follow up action till satisfactory results are obtained

Figure 2: The implementation strategy used by ADHAR to roll out its social accountability exercises in Bolangir district of Odisha

Source: OneWorld Foundation India

Level of Participation

ADHAR has been able to ensure participation of the community as well as service providers in the CSC exercise. Role of village leaders was important in communicating purpose of the CSC to stakeholders.

Till the time of this study, 17 scoring exercises and interface meetings had been held in Bolangir with active participation of community. The process has helped the village community across the district to engage in the process of governance rather than be mere recipients of benefits. Further, the process is also increasing the sensitisation of women on the provisions for them within the schemes. For instance, to enroll female workers into MGNREGA it was crucial to provide certain facilities at the worksite like crèche and shelter for young children. The provision of such facilities is helping women come on board and voice their concerns in the scoring exercise and interface meetings.

ADHAR has managed to bring service providers on board in various villages. Local government officials have extended their support by agreeing to provide the scheme implementation information by evaluating their own performance and participating in interface meetings. Government officials have also worked towards arriving at solutions. However,

there have been instances where it was difficult to convince local officials to support the CSC exercise. For example, in the Bhuslat village in Malegaon *panchayat*, local government officials refused to allow the community scoring exercise. The community is now attempting to use RTI to pressurise the officials to disclose scheme-related information, which they could then use towards the creation of an accountable environment.

To sensitise service providers, ADHAR recently conducted a one-day district level programme in Bolangir attended by senior officials involved in the implementation of both the schemes. ADHAR demonstrated the need, suitability and relevance of the use of social accountability tools like CSCs in strengthening the implementation and was able to convey the need to institutionalise such efforts.

Impact

In order to understand the impact and relevance of ADHAR's intervention, FGDs were conducted in four *panchayats*. These included Sagadghat and Manigaon in Titlagarh block and Saintala and Beedhighat in Bolangir (Sadar) block.

The selected *panchayats* represented an interesting mix of experiences and were at different stages of implementation in terms of the CSC exercise. It was observed that results were more prominent in the Bolangir Block as compared to Titlagarh, this could be attributed to the proximity of the former to the district headquarters.

Block	*Gram Panchayat*	Social composition	Schemes Covered under CSC	Status of CSC process
Titlagarh	Sagadghat	Mainly Scheduled Tribes (STs)	MGNREGA	Scoring and interface meeting has been conducted. A follow up meeting was also held.
	Manigaon	Mainly Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Other Backward Castes (OBCs)	MGNREGA	Awareness created about the schemes, CSC and RTI mechanism.
Bolangir (Sadar)	Saintala	Mainly OBCs	PDS	Scoring and interface meeting has beenconducted.
	Beedhighat	Mainly STs	MGNREGA & PDS	Scoring and interface meeting has been conducted.

Table 3: Details of project areas visited during the field research for this study

Source: OneWorld Foundation India

These discussions clubbed with ADHAR's inputs point towards the following impact of the CSC process in Bolangir.

Community empowerment

Till date, ADHAR has disseminated knowledge on social accountability tools to about 8000-9000 villagers in all the five blocks. Prior to ADHAR's intervention, the local communities were silent recipients of what the government had to offer without having any medium to express their discontent or voice their opinions and concerns. The CSC process has empowered vulnerable sections with adequate information to demand their legal entitlements and bring about a transformation in governance scenario.

The scorecards have given the community the know-how for conducting a simple accountability exercise, which makes them identify loopholes in the implementation of crucial schemes like MGNREGA and PDS and also brainstorm for possible solutions. It enables them to interact directly with officials and persuade them to introduce changes. This process builds a collective spirit of engagement in the community and serves to exert pressure on government authorities.

Engagement between government and citizens

The success of a social accountability exercise depends on the intensity of involvement -that of both citizens and service providers. ADHAR, having realised this, worked towards bridging the gap between the village community in Bolangir and the local government officials, and created a channel for open communication. Interface meetings allowed beneficiaries and local government officials to discuss their concerns, helping the community better understand the limitations of service providers on one hand and, on the other hand, helped the service providers to understand the needs of the community.

For instance, interface meetings in Bolangir, helped villagers understand that complaints regarding poor worksite conditions in MGNREGA could be redressed by *pradhans a*nd *gram sathis* and those pertaining to delayed payment of wages would have to be taken up by

higher authorities. Similarly, evidence at all four *panchayats* visited by researchers proved that regular distribution under PDS would require the cooperation of senior officials. Most villagers agreed that about 80 per cent of their MGNREGA concerns had been addressed, while the remaining 20 per cent, related to delay in wages, would eventually be realised if the engagement continues.

The approach of focusing on problems that could be quickly resolved helps in building the confidence of the community and supports service providers.

Reforms in scheme implementation

Along with building the community's confidence, the CSC process is making visible reforms in the implementation of both the schemes in the regions. Under MGNREGA, visible gaps have been identified in service delivery. As seen in the table there are deficiencies in providing shelter, first aid and crèche facilities. When this was highlighted during the interface meeting, the government officials agreed with the villagers that the provision of these facilities could increase the participation of female workers and addressed these concerns. As a result, more and more women are coming forth to demand work. Complaints of job cards being wrongly confiscated have also been attended to and workers are being granted acknowledgement slips for a job demand request, which they were earlier denied.

Similarly, under PDS complaints about the quality and quantity of food grains were successfully addressed. Earlier, villagers were often given lesser than they were entitled to and poor quality of food grains. This is being checked in certain villages. In Goelbhadi village of Saintala *panchayat* in Bolangir district villagers were being given 25 kilos of rice every month under the PDS, 10 kilos less than their entitlement. Consequent to a CSC exercise held in the region, this issue was brought up and has now has been checked.

Key Challenges and Mitigation Measures

While ADHAR is achieving relative success in using the CSC process for ensuring accountable and transparent delivery of benefits under MGNREGA and PDS, the large scope of these schemes and the complexities of conducting a comprehensive CSC exercise present challenges.

Difficulties in capacity building

For conducting an effective CSC exercise, ADHAR required able and committed field staff with the capacities and skill-sets that could bring the community on board and also facilitate the process. This was an extremely challenging task. Given the socio-economic profile of the region, it was hard to identify willing and apt resource persons. Eventually, ADHAR succeeded in selecting villagers who showed interest in social work and had basic knowledge about how governance processes work.

Post selection, the resource persons were given intensive training on SA tools and on conducting the entire process. Though time consuming, this task was done to secure the sustainability of the effort.

Difficulties in getting support of service providers

Not all service providers have extended their support to ADHAR's effort and that poses a major challenge in taking the accountability process forward. The absence of service providers' support and willingness to participate in the project poses the risk of alienating and de-motivating the community and minimising the outcomes. Therefore, ADHAR is attempting to secure the support of all service providers by either convincing them or by using the threat of RTI.

FACTORS BEHIND ADHAR'S SUCCESS

TWENTY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN WORKING ON VARIOUS ISSUES THROUGHOUT THE REGION

SIMPLE, APPROPRIATE AND FLEXIBLE PROGRAMME DESIGN

EMPHASIS ON A COOPERATIVE APPROACH WITH SERVICE PROVIDERS

Failure to address all concerns related to both the schemes

Both MGNREGA and PDS have loopholes at various levels. Some of these loopholes can be addressed at the local level and quickly, while others require intervention from higher authorities and will require more time. While the CSC process is succeeding in addressing immediate concerns, it is struggling to address grievances related to the timely payment of wages and distribution of grains. Being crucial elements of the schemes, laxity on this front can undermine the community's belief in the CSC exercise.

Conflicts during interface meetings

Though service providers and the community interact generally at interface meetings in a spirit of cooperation, situations do go out of hand every once in a while. It is unrealistic to expect service providers to disclose complete scheme information during the meetings, which often leaves the community dissatisfied. Similarly, given the rare opportunity to interact face-to-face with government officials, villagers often mix issues and deviate from the agenda of the meetings. These factors are a tough challenge to the VDAC members while facilitating the interface meetings and keeping the focus on the issue at hand.

Along with these operational challenges, the project area is also witnessing an increase in insurgent activities which is disrupting operations and causing process delays.

Lessons Learned

Through ADHAR's experience, it is evident that promoting social accountability is a gradual process and generating visible results takes substantial time. However, by breaking the process into phases and utilising a simple tool, it is possible to achieve short term results.

Pool of committed community resource persons

The feasibility of mobilising community support for a social accountability project is greater because of potential favourable outcomes. This is, however, demanding work and it requires a set of committed people capable of convincing villagers that Social accountability tools are useful and they deliver positive results. ADHAR has succeeded in cultivating capable community facilitators who play a crucial role in facilitating the process by actively engaging with local stakeholders.

In summary, social accountability projects must begin by identifying capable village facilitators to connect projects with communities. This ensures lasting involvement and interest of the community. Similarly, a committed set of resource persons at the ground can work towards pressuring local government officials and convincing them to cooperate.

Service providers support is crucial

The degree of support from service providers varies from panchayat to *panchayat*. Some extend their support to all activities including self-evaluation and interface meeting. There are also *panchayats*, like in the case of Malegaon, where support from local government officials was completely absent. Therefore, while it is important to sensitise the community about social accountability tools, it is equally vital to get service providers on board.

Need for developing networks and building alliances

Although ADHAR's intervention as a project is over, there is a great deal to be achieved yet beyond what it has done: sensitising the community, convincing some local government officials and yielding some immediate outcomes in both MGNREGA and PDS. However, for long term achievements, ADHAR needs to expand on its current relationships with other civil society organisations working in the area as well as with the government.

MGNREGA and PDS are important national schemes that already have the attention of many civil society organisations. At the same time the amount of public expenditure and the scope of these schemes put them in the high priority list of the government. Leveraging these two aspects, ADHAR should work towards involving and networking with like-minded organisations to put pressure on policy makers for their effective implementation.

Merging social accountability tools

ADHAR has utilised a mix of social accountability tools (CRCs, CSCs and RTI) at various stages of its intervention in Bolangir. In this respect, CSC is proving to be quite relevant and has potential to make an impact owing to its targeted approach and simple procedure. CSCs result in visible and quick outcomes that can be a highly motivating factor for the community. However, application of CSC to matters involving the block administration and district level remains to be tested.

Since the implementation of MGNREGA and PDS around the country encounters hurdles similar to the ones in Bolangir, CSCs can be deployed in villages elsewhere as well. However, CSCs alone may not be the appropriate tool for complete transparency in the operation of such large scale schemes.

Potential for Scale-up

In a limited period of time, ADHAR has managed to spread awareness about social accountability tools in the region and has successfully leveraged the CSC tool to introduce certain reforms in public service delivery. Nevertheless, to enhance the quality of governance and its processes, the project needs to be scaled-up horizontally to include more *panchayats* in Bolangir. Simultaneously, the prospect of scaling-up vertically to the district level (covering all districts) where concerns those are beyond the control of local officials should also be considered.

Building alliances

ADHAR's experience shows that an organisation with some years of experience and familiarity with the target region is best placed to successfully use social accountability tools and create an atmosphere of responsible governance. ADHAR should, therefore, work towards identifying such grass roots organisations and train them on social accountability tools. In this manner, the village communities' awareness across various blocks in the state about the need, use and types of social accountability tools will greatly increase and their ability to engage and question local government officials will rise. At the same time,

contact with other civil society organisations will add clout to the entire process of social accountability, which can be utilised to put greater collective pressure on service providers. Such a process should begin with identifying like-minded organisations, extending training support to them, hand holding them in conducting social accountability exercises (CRCs and CSCs wherever applicable), moving towards immediate outcomes and using these successes as evidence for institutionalising such social accountability processes.

Institutionalisation for sustainability

The most pressing challenge in a social accountability project is getting the service providers on board. It is crucial to develop an institutional accountability mechanism which is legally binding on service providers and pushes them to cooperate in the process. While smaller successes are achieved without such an institutional mechanism, achieving holistic improvement and transparency in governance beyond the community level and moving upwards towards the district and state level requires a combination of multiple tools.

However, it can be argued that such a mechanism already exists, for instance, in the form of social audits which are mandatory under the MGNREGA. But these have unfortunately failed to live up to expectations mainly because of the fact that they are a one-sided process, with no community involvement and no record of the community's perception. Besides, the government is both the implementer and the auditor of the project rendering the process redundant.

Therefore, there is need to institutionalise a social accountability process that takes into account the citizens concerns as well and leaves no scope for a biased account of a particular governance situation. A successful example of an empowering accountability mechanism is the RTI, which makes it compulsory for government officials to provide citizens with government information on request which can be used as evidence for demanding accountability. Though there are challenges in its implementation, the RTI is now seen as a threat by government officials leaving them open to scrutiny.

ANNEX

Annex 1: About The Implementing Organisation

ADHAR is a grassroots level development organisation, which was initiated by a group of intellectual activists in the year 1992. their mission is to promote social inclusion and democratic along with responsive and accountable governance so that all the vulnerable sections and their children are empowered to effectively participate in mainstream development and decision-making and implementing processes as well, at all levels. adhar has multi discipline expertise and competencies in promoting and strengthening organisation, building leadership and community capacity, building networking and alliance, conducting research, strengthening grass root governance, ensuring people's participation in decision making process etc.

Annex 2: Interview Questionnaire

Background

1. Why was there a need to conduct the exercise of CSCs in Bolangir? Why were scorecards preferred over other social accountability tools?
2. How many villages does the CSC exercise cover? The scoring takes place for three major GOI schemes i.e. MGNREGA, PDS and ICDS. Why were these particular schemes selected for scoring?
3. The key stakeholders in the project are ADHAR, community members and service providers. What are their roles and responsibilities?

Process flow

4. Can you explain the process through which scoring indicators are developed? What are some of the main indicators?
5. What does the process of scoring entail? Who is responsible for facilitating the scoring exercises at:

    a) service provider level

    b) community level

    Is the person/authority in charge given some sort of training? If yes, what does the training entail?
6. Who is responsible for collating the information collected through the scoring exercise? How is this done?
7. How many times has the exercise of CSCs been carried out both by villagers and officials so far? Have all three of the concerned schemes been scored?
8. After scoring, an interface meeting is called between villagers and government officials to discuss the highlighted issues and the Village Development Action Committees (VDAC) is responsible for facilitating this meeting. How is this VDAC formed? Does each village have its own VDAC? What is the composition of the VDAC? How are the members selected and what are their roles?
9. Till February 2011, four interface meetings between the community and government officials were held. How many more such meetings have been held from Feb, 2011 to March 2012?
10. After the interface meetings, an action plan is developed to address the highlighted problem areas. Who monitors the formation and implementation of this action plan?
11. How was the government officials convinced of the need for conducting such scoring exercises? Was there any resistance from their side? If yes, how were they overcome?
12. How was the villagers support gathered? Since illiteracy is a major problem in the region, how was the village community convinced about the importance of such scoring exercises?

Impact

13. What are the major problems that have been highlighted through this process of scoring and the interface meetings in each of these schemes? What are the specific steps that have been taken to address these problems? Have these steps resulted in any positive outcomes?
14. What are the major challenges (social, economic and political) faced in conducting this social accountability exercise? How were they overcome?
15. What is the impact/ major outcomes of this accountability exercise?

    a. For the community

    b. For the service providers

    c. On governance processes

    Do you think the process has increased information exchange and collaboration between the community and the service providers?
16. Has there been any effort from your side to institutionalise the process of conducting community scoring of schemes? If yes, at what level is this effort? If no, are there any plans to do so?
17. Are there any other enhancements planned for the future? If yes, what are they?
18. Please share any relevant data to reflect impact.

    a. Number of scoring exercises and the number of people covered so far

    b. Number of interface meetings held so far

c. Number of actions plans prepared and implemented etc.

Questions for Service-Providers

1. How did you hear about ADHAR? Have you ever participated in the CSC process? If yes, what motivated you to participate?

   a. What schemes did you score and on which indicators?

   b. Did you receive any help in doing the scoring? Did you face any difficulties in the scoring process? If yes, what were they?

2. Have you been a part of the interface meetings between villagers and service providers? If yes, then

   a. what is the process of these meetings?

   b. were you able to express your concerns in these meetings?

   c. what is the result of these meetings?

3. What are the major problems that have been highlighted through the scoring process and interface meetings for each of the schemes?

4. An action plan is made to address the problems raised in the meetings.

   a. Have the measures mentioned in the action plan been implemented?

   b. Are you satisfied with the steps taken?

5. What are the main advantages of conducting such a government performance scoring exercise according to you? In the absence of ADHAR's presence, would you be willing to continue such a scoring process?

6. Has the scoring process increased your interaction with community members? Do you think it has helped the government become responsive to their needs and demands?

7. Do you have any suggestions for improving the scoring process?

Questions for Beneficiaries

1. How did you hear about ADHAR? Have you heard of the community scorecard process? If yes,
   a. have you ever participated in such a scoring process?

c. what schemes did you score and on which indicators?

d. did you receive any help in doing the scoring? Did you face any difficulties in the scoring process? If yes, what were they?

2. Have you been a part of the interface meetings between villagers and service providers? If yes,

   a. what is the process of these meetings?

   b. are you able to express your concerns in these meetings?

   c. what is the result of these meetings?

3. What are the major problems that have been highlighted through the scoring process and interface meetings for each of the schemes?

4. Are you aware that an action plan is made on the basis of the problems raised in the meetings? If yes,

   a. have the measures suggested in the action plan been implemented?

   b. are you satisfied with the steps taken?

5. What are the main advantages of conducting such a government performance scoring exercise according to you?

6. Has the scoring process increased your interaction with service providers? Do you think they have become responsive to your needs and demands?

7. Do you have any suggestions for improving the scoring process?

CASE STUDY 2
Audit The Right To Education

Introduction

The Right to Education Act, implemented in 2010 in Rajasthan, lists an elaborate set of provisions facilitating the delivery of quality education in government schools based on greater accountability and collective action. (The Right to Education, or RTE, entitles every child aged between 6 and 14 years to eight years of elementary education). The concept of School Management Committees (SMCs) as part of the monitoring mechanism embodies government efforts to institutionalise accountability in the education delivery system. However, the low capacity of key stakeholders, especially parents, has impeded the rollout of SMC. In 2011, the Centre for Civil Society (CCS) launched the Audit the Right to Education project with support from

Intervention	Community Scorecard
Key Objective	Improve the quality of education delivery
Location	Kota, Rajasthan
Organisation	Centre for Civil Society
Sector	Education
Target Audience	Children, Parents and Teachers
Geographic Scope	Nine schools in Bamori, Similia and Ward 48 in Kota district

Affiliated Network for Social Accountability (ANSA) to reform the school education system by promoting greater access to education. The focus of CCS in the region is to advance the practice of ideas enshrined in RTE by turning SMCs into an effective mechanism of good governance.

CCS intervenes in the functional activities of SMCs at local levels by using a community scorecard as a social accountability tool. The local context provides a dynamic framework that highlights the strengths and weaknesses of administering these committees. Field evidence shows that collective action, which is crucial to the success of the SMC, remains constrained by the challenges of poverty and social marginalisation, illiteracy, lack of awareness, livelihood insecurity, poor levels of social participation and involvement and inadequate levels of motivation.

With an elaborate process centered on improving the awareness and level of community members and training them to assess delivery the organisation reinforces the role of active citizens to monitor and evaluate the delivery of public service. A unique top-down approach is followed to secure the participation of service providers (government agencies) and local communities in the social accountability process. Efforts are made to align and channel mutual interests towards overcoming roadblocks and ensuring the effective functioning of SMCs.

The case study acts as a lens to locate the relevance of the concept of social accountability and the extent to which it can facilitate to create benchmarks for good governance.

Context

With the implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act in 2010, every child aged between six and 14 years of age is entitled to free education. The Act primarily aims at improving the access to elementary education by securing basic academic, infrastructural and learning facilities based on a legal guarantee[1]. Given the challenge of poor implementation of public services, the Act confers the responsibility of fulfilling the provisions upon the School Management Committee SMC, a

representative guardian institution for monitoring implementation. SMC institutionalises active participation of parents and the community in the management of school. These committees, constituted for each school, comprise elected representatives of the local authority, parents and guardians of children, school teachers and students. The specific functions of SMCs include:

- Regularly monitoring the working of the school
- Preparing and recommending school development plan
- Tracking the utilisation of the grants received from the appropriate government or local authority or any other source

Foreseen as a landmark law towards universalising primary education, the Right to Education Act confronts critical ground-level challenges that restrain the governance arrangement from delivering effectively on objectives like access, quality and equity.

Interactions with members of CCS, parents, teachers and government officials revealed poor levels of community involvement as a major hindrance to effective fulfillment of RTE's provisions. The poor levels of motivation could be attributed to the social context: parents in the project belonged to the most backward sections of society and their children were among the first-generation learners in their families. Engaging these parents actively in education was a challenge.

Despite significant efforts, the state government struggles to achieve active participation of the community in implementation of RTE due to these factors. According to the additional district project coordinator, it has organised 15 SMC training sessions and district and block level workshops on RTE. To promote participation, a monetary incentive of Rs 30 (Rs 57 to a US $) was offered to the communities to attend these events. The incentive was to ensure that the participants, many of whom were daily wagers, could stay through the workshops without worrying about their day's income.

The socio-economic context combined with the absence of adequate levels of awareness, restricted informed participation and

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[1]. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, http://rajssa.nic.in/RTE/1.pdf

community ownership of SMCs, which is a crucial pre-condition for the successful realisation of the Act. The onus of fulfilling the provisions of the Act continues to rest solely upon the service providers and does not emerge from a collective demand for good quality education.

Therefore, with an aim to improve the education system in Bamori, Similia and Ward 48 in Kota, Rajasthan, the Audit the Right to Education (ATRTE) project was initiated in 2011. The project applies community scorecards as a participatory performance monitoring tool to:

i. Strengthen the level of awareness about RTE Act.
ii. Improve in delivery of education services in the schools in accordance with the requirements of the RTE Act.
iii. Facilitate constructive engagement between service providers and beneficiaries to sustain the development of school education system.

CCS selected Kota district because it had limited experiences of major civil society interventions in the field of education. Therefore, civic awareness about the importance of child literacy and school education remained undeveloped or too weak to translate into collective efforts demanding accountability within the education system. There was a pressing need to mobilise the communities and ensure active participation and involvement to achieve the objective of improving access to good quality education.

## Social Accountability Process

A systematic approach was followed to strategise execution of the pilot in Kota. Important aspects covered in the project include strengthening local presence through credible partner, conducting baseline survey to assess the level of community awareness, meetings with the government to sensitise them towards the importance of accountability, and mass awareness campaigns in villages to encourage participation. Although concentrated efforts should have ensured success, CCS encountered numerous challenges. Consequently, the target population for scorecard participation was narrowed down. Following sections present the

activities undertaken to introduce the social accountability tool.

Identifying local partners

CCS had limited presence in Rajasthan, especially in Kota. Therefore, the Centre for British Teacher (CfBT) was selected as the local partner. CfBT was experienced in implementing social accountability tools, particularly the community scorecard, and has worked in Rajasthan. This provided the required expertise to strategically introduce the social accountability concept in Kota. However, a challenge for civil society organisations entering a new geographic area is the ability to be accepted by the community. Building a rapport with the local population often takes years or the evidence of proven benefits in terms of actual development in the village. In case of CCS and CfBT neither was present. To overcome this barrier, *Gramin Vikas* Trust (GVT), a local non-profit, working in the area on issues of sanitation was roped in as a partner. The key role of GVT was to mobilise the communities and inform them about the project activities. Since the GVT staff belonged to the village, they were more readily accepted by its communities.

Key Stakeholders
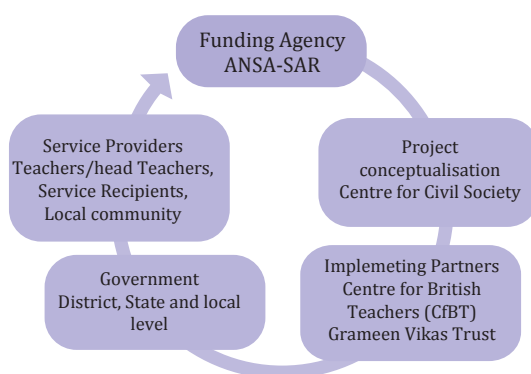
Baseline Survey

An overview of the findings of the baseline survey conducted by the CCS in the villages of Bamori, Similia, and Ward 48 in Kota, Rajasthan provides a glimpse of the existing reality. The survey was conducted to assess the status of the school education system in Kota. This was based

on a quantitative assessment of the level awareness of the RTE Act, the general perception about quality education and the participation of parents/guardians in the education process. Around 350 parents and 50 teaching staff belonging to nine schools and seven *Anganwadi* Centers were interviewed. (*Anganwadi* Centers are village crèches. Though mainly for the children of farm labourers, these assume primacy as delivery points for all village-level mother-and-child interventions by the government.)

Key Findings

- The awareness level of parents/guardians about the Act was on average, between 40 and 60 percent. The interviewed community included parents of children in *anganwadi* as well as in schools. The level of awareness of teachers ranged between 70 and 80 per cent.
- Free education and accessibility were among the main reasons for the preference for government schools amongst parents. On the other hand, private schools were favoured for providing good quality education.
- Parents' awareness and participation in school activities and SMC in all three pilot areas was 40-50 percent on an average.

Convergence meetings

Following the baseline survey, the main objective was to share the findings of the study with the representatives of the government and other stakeholders. The convergence meeting was a strategy to acquaint government authorities about the ATRTE project. It aimed at creating a conducive atmosphere for community and the government to collectively discuss and deliberate the RTE Act and its impact on the local education system.

While sharing the findings of the baseline survey, the organisation also used the opportunity to initiate a dialogue between the government and the citizens and generate support and cooperation for its interventions in the region. The interaction was amongst the first of its kinds in terms of bringing the communities face to face with government on the issue of education. Government authorities considered it a crucial step towards strengthening the impact of the RTE Act through a constructive exchange of ideas and experiences.

CCS, therefore, ensured that the government remained involved with the project from the start and at every stage. Most importantly, it aimed at orienting the governance arrangement to the idea of collective participation.

Awareness campaign

CCS was able to successfully organise a broad based awareness campaign on the RTE targeting more than 500 local communities including key stakeholders (parents, students and teachers of the targeted schools) across the three pilot locations of Bamori, Simlia and Ward 48.

The *Kala Jathas* (street play troupes) handouts on the RTE Act and awareness meetings were planned to orient parents to the free and special provisions and their role and responsibilities towards school and their children's education. Banners, pamphlet distributions and road shows were adopted as the major strategies to maximise the coverage of the campaign.

Community Scorecard exercise

The Community Scorecard (CSC) implementation strategy adopted by CCS aimed at developing an arrangement that encourages the government and community to collectively work together to address issues hindering primary education. As such, the basic design of community scorecard was customised, pertaining to the socio-economic challenges in implementing the social accountability tool in the local context. The factors that influenced the design of the tool included;

- Absence of basic awareness about RTE and its provisions
- Poor levels of literacy
- Preference for local dialect, *Hadauti*, which does not have its own script.
- Limited exposure to collective participation and mobilisation

Recognising these limitations, the CCS reworked its approach to implementing the community scorecard in two phases. Since creating basic

awareness about RTE and its provisions among the communities was necessary for active and sustained engagement, this was the primary focus during the first phase of implementation. The scorecard for this phase was designed for parents/guardians and students specifically. Each scorecard contained a list of RTE provisions. The participants were expected to fill the scorecard individually by rating the performance of schools on various parameters. The process was conducted through an elaborate method of discussion facilitated by the *Gramin Vikas* Trust.

Interestingly, the basic design of community scorecards developed by the CCS inherits features of a citizen report card. The scorecards were intended to be filled independently rather than collectively by participants to develop a quantitative database reflecting the perceptions of service recipients on the quality, access, availability and efficiency of the delivery of educational services in schools. This exercise allowed CCS in understanding the status of service in the targeted schools.

Figure 1. Community Scorecard for the first phase

कम्यूनिटी स्कोर कार्ड

तिथि: ५-१२-११

सामान्य जानकारी: ब्लॉक /टाउन: .... व .... ५ ५ .... ग्राम पंचायत: .... ग्राम: ....

कम्युनिटी / स्वयं सहायता समूह का नाम .... लिंग [M] कम्युनिटी [✓] शिक्षा [✓]

महिला / पुरुष (a) SC; b) ST; c) BC; d) Others) (a) Illiterate; b) below SSC; c) SSC; d) Inter; e)Degree and above]

क्र. सं	प्रमुख क्षेत्र		कम्युनिटी ✓	स्कूल स्टाफ	अधिकारी
1) पहुँच - 1/2/3kms में स्कूल			कौन सा स्कूल माता पिता को सबसे ज़्यादा पसंद है?		
1		सरकारी स्कूल	✓ नहीं		
		निजी स्कूल	✗		
2	वाहन भत्ता		क्या आपके बच्चे दूर के स्कूली में जा रहा है और वाहन सवारी खर्च के लिए भुगतान मिल रहा है?		
		अगर वहाँ 3 किमी के भीतर कोई स्कूल नहीं है, छात्रों को सवारी खर्च भुगतान किया जायेगा	✗ नहीं		
3	अनिवार्य स्कूली शिक्षा		क्या आप के गांव/अधिकार क्षेत्र मेंअभी भी स्कूल से बाहर 6-14साल के बीच बच्चे स्कूल के बाहर है?		
		6 से 14 साल उम्र के बच्चों का स्कूली में दाखिला किया जाना चाहिए	✓ हाँ		
2) उपलब्धता - समय की पाबंदी और उपस्थिति			छात्रों के अधिकांश समय की पाबंद और नियमित रूप से स्कूल के लिए आ रहे है?		
1		समय की पाबंदी और अच्छी तरह से संगठित अध्यक्ष	✓ हाँ		
		उपस्थिति - 80% से अधिक बच्चे के रूप में सामने आता है	✓ हाँ		
2	फीस वाउचर		गरीब परिवारों से निजी स्कूली में पढ़ रहे बच्चों के लिए भुगतान शुल्क मिल रहा है?		
		गरीब परिवारों के बच्चों के लिए निजी स्कूलों में 25% सीटों के आरक्षण और सरकार द्वारा फीस की भुगतान	R.T.E. भरिमो भातून हुआ		
3	सभी सरकारी स्कूलों में पढ़ रहे छात्रों के लिए मुफ्त प्रावधान		इनमें से कौनसा सामग्री छात्रों को मुफ्त प्रदान की जाती है? (जो सामग्री मुफ्त प्रदान की जाती है √ ज्ञात और अन्य के लिए X ज्ञात)		
			I. पाठ पुस्तकें ✓ II. वर्दी के 2 जोड़े ✗ III. मध्याह्न भोजन ✓ IV. शिक्षा ✓ V. लड़कियों के लिए कस्तूरबा गांधी बालिका विद्यालय स्कूली में शिक्षा VI. RSTC / केजीबीवी बच्चों के लिए वोकेशनल पाठ्यक्रमों में मुफ्त प्रशिक्षण	I. पाठ पुस्तकें II. वर्दी के 2 जोड़े III. मध्याह्न भोजन IV. शिक्षा V. लड़कियों के लिए कस्तूरबा गांधी बालिका विद्यालय स्कूली में शिक्षा VI. RSTC / केजीबीवी बच्चों के लिए वोकेशनल पाठ्यक्रमों में	I. पाठ पुस्तकें II. वर्दी के 2 जोड़े III. मध्याह्न भोजन IV. शिक्षा V. लड़कियों के लिए कस्तूरबा गांधी बालिका विद्यालय स्कूली में शिक्षा VI. RSTC / केजीबीवी बच्चों के लिए वोकेशनल प्रशिक्षण

Figure 2. School Scorecard for the second phase

Based on the initial experience of conducting scorecards, CCS is of the view that communities still lack the capacity to engage in the system of school education and play their role as key stakeholders. It is difficult to involve them in a process that demands extensive evaluation and assessment of school education as these issues still fail to find a strong hold within the community. Hence, the primary focus of the first phase of community scorecard exercise is directed towards enhancing the level of awareness about the RTE Act. According to the organisation, the exercise, at some level, has encouraged them to ask questions about school education and recognise its significance gradually. Moreover, the process and related interactions with the communities also facilitated the organisation to engage with them better by familiarising them with itself and its efforts to improve the existing school education system. This has helped enhance the level of trust between the organisation and the communities.

Since the capacity building of communities may take long, CCS recognises that it may be difficult to identify emerging issues in the school education system and take adequate measures at the policy level. As a consequence, the organisation has planned to narrow down its approach to target only SMCs. The aim is to work with sections of the community that are adequately aware about the RTE and the responsibilities of the SMC. The second phase plans to initiate the school scorecard within the SMCs and target the service providers and service recipients constituting the committees. It aims at involving the members to monitor the effective functioning of key areas in a school. The organisation intends to encourage SMCs to become more accountable and transparent through this process. The implementation of the second phase of school scorecards is in process.

The uniqueness of CCS approach is highlighted in the importance given to ensuring support from key government representatives. Continuous efforts were made to meet the District Collector of Kota, and get his approval to support the implementation of RTE in Rajasthan. Upon establishing a relationship with the government, it was easier for CCS to interact with *Panchayat* leaders. (*Panchayat* is the term for locally elected, village self-governance councils, whose administrative jurisdiction is congruous to the geography of village or villages they represent. *Panchayats* are recognised as the third tier of government by law in India.) They were notified by the district collector and block level officers about CCS' initiative in the area. The project succeeded in engaging the government/service providers because of its focus on generating awareness. Government representatives view the project alongside their awareness campaigns. As the need for disseminating Act-related information is recognised by the Education Department, CCS activities are perceived to facilitate government's effort of empowering the community.

Community

- Build awareness about RTE and the provisions
- Maximise involvement in the school education system

Service Providers

- Capacitate them to monitor and review effective functioning of key areas as provided under the Act
- o Make themselves accountable and responsive

Collective Community Effort

Constructive engagement between beneficiaries and service providers to channel collective efforts towards improving the delivery of educational services based on greater accountability and transparency.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Step 1: Establishing Partnership

- Interactions with key government officials at the state, district and block level and building sustainable partnerships to facilitate percolation of the intiative to the local level.
- Identifying Centre for British Teachers (CfBT) as the local partner

Step 2: Integrating key stakeholders into the initiative

- Informal meeting with local communities to assess the ground reality
- Training and capacity-buiding of village level implementing agency *Grameen Vikas* Trust and members of CCS by CfBT in Hydrebad.
- Baseline survey
- Convergence Meeting to share the findings of baseline survey with key stakeholders and introduce the intiative.

Step 3: Implementing school scorecards as a social accountability tool

- Broad based awareness campaign on RTE based on pamphlets distribution, information and awarenessmeetings and *kalajathas*.
- Designing and developing the school scorecard
- Administering the first phase of the school scorecard with the community.
- The second phase of the school scorecard will target SMCs specifically. It also aims at tracing the level of progress in the delivery of school education system against the findings of the first excercise. Its implemetation is under process.

Step 4: Channeling collective efforts

- Collate the data and facilitate a constructive interface between the communties and the service providers.

Level of Participation

CCS has made significant efforts to engage with the communities at different stages in order to secure their maximum participation and involvement of the communities. However, on an average, not more than 30 parents participated in these meetings in nine schools, in each of the three target areas. The involvement of service providers was much lower - in total less than 20 teachers participated in each of the three target areas.

The level of participation from the communities during the convergence meeting and the community scorecard exercise was average. The following tables record the total number of participants present during the first phase of community scorecards across nine schools in Kota district.

Government Officers	Community members	Teachers	NGO Professionals	Self Help groups	School Management Committees	*Anganwadi* Workers	Total
9	16	6	10	4	3	9	57

Date	Location	Category	Count
3/12/2011	**Bomori**	Children	**56**
		School Management	**12**
5/12/2011		Parents	**35**
		Panchayat Members	**3**
5/12/2011	**Similiya**	Children	**44**
		School Management	**8**
7/12/2011		Parents	**20**
		Panchayat Members	**4**
7/12/2011	**Ward 48**	Children	**35**
		School Management	**10**
8/12/2011		Parents	**15**
		Panchayat Members	**0**

It is evident that the participation of children was much higher than other stakeholders. The lowest participation has been recorded amongst *panchayat* members, while parents and members of SMCs provided average involvement in the exercise.

With the focus shifting to SMCs in the second phase of the school scorecard exercise, the organisation was able to maintain an average participation of 45 members in each of the three pilot areas. Maximum involvement was limited as the time of the implementation coincided with the harvesting season. As a result, some parents were unable to attend the session. However, the organisation ensured that these members were contacted individually and their responses were recorded.

Active involvement of government has been the highlighting feature of the initiative undertaken by RTE. CCS has been able to gain the confidence of key administrators in the government. They have actively participated in the initiative. The government officials expressed their cooperation by attending the convergence meeting and by actively supporting the project launch with their presence.

Results

As the project is still in its early phase, it is difficult to pinpoint its development outcomes in terms of the multi-layered changes that it is designed to usher in for improving public education. The results of the community scorecards exercise are being examined on crucial fronts such as increasing awareness, empowering citizens and engaging citizens and service providers.

Increased awareness

Focus group discussions with the parents/guardians and the children at Bamori and Kamalpura primary schools revealed that the students were much more informed about the provisions of the RTE Act than adults. Community members were ignorant about the entitlements mentioned in the Act. While the teachers were trained by the government on RTE, the information disclosed to the students and parents were on individual discretion.

The awareness campaigns by the government, *Kala Jathas* and SMC meetings, and the community scorecard interventions have played a crucial role in enforcing the importance of school education and child literacy amongst the parents. While parents/guardians are still to recognise and adopt their role in improving the access to good quality primary education, this project has cultivated in them a sense of responsibility towards its effective fulfillment. This is evident in the fact that communities have shown interest and participated in the SMC and GVT meetings at intervals.

Informed discussions

The implementation of community scorecards has created opportunities that enable the stakeholders to engage with each other and collectively participate in improving the delivery of quality education at the local level. In Bamori, for instance, interactions with the students revealed that teachers have actively engaged with students and used the scorecard as a medium to make them aware about school and their educational entitlements. Teachers and students were able to discuss sensitive issues like corporal punishment and a child's right to protection against such actions as per the provisions of the Act. Parents also shared the view that scorecards have been a useful source of information and has encouraged them to engage with teachers.

While the primary objective of the first phase of school scorecards was spreading awareness, it involved students, parents and school teachers in evaluating the present system of school education against the provisions of the Act. In a way, the process enabled communities to collectively assess the accountability of service providers towards citizens.

Evolving partnership between civil society and government

The CCS has worked extensively to strengthen relations with the government and managed to secure the support and cooperation of key government officials in a short period of time. This partnership has greatly facilitated the organisation's intervention in local governance arrangements. The Additional District Project Coordinator recognised CCS's role in augmenting the government's efforts to popularise RTE in Rajasthan.

These efforts have benefited the organisation to a great extent. The District Collector of Baran has been exceptionally supportive of the school scorecard exercise. The government officer has been actively involved with CCS to expand the coverage and the impact of the social accountability initiative to improve the delivery of educational services across the region.

However, it remains challenging to secure broad based support for a participatory performance monitoring tool that actively involves citizens to evaluate the accountability of the service providers. CCS has to ensure that government's support and commitment is sustained to be able to effectively initiate the next stage of the project that entails the implementation of scorecards.

Key Challenges and Mitigation Measures

Low level of RTE awareness

CCS had planned to implement the project soon after the government's RTE awareness drive. However, the awareness campaign undertaken by the government extended beyond the stipulated time of completion. Therefore, the organisation was forced to delay the initiation of the project until the conclusion of the government intervention.

The delay affected the implementation strategy significantly. Upon initiating the project, the organisation confronted a major challenge. Despite the government's campaign to enhance awareness, communities had very little information about the RTE Act and its provisions. A basic level awareness that was required to facilitate the project at the local level was absent. As a result, the community scorecard exercise had to be introduced in two phases wherein the first phase aimed at awareness and knowledge building of the local communities.

Motivation levels of the community

Since the initiative primarily targets a community constituted largely of daily wage labourers who have little time to spare, it has been a challenge to foster adequate community involvement for the intervention. Interactions with parents at the Kamalpura primary school revealed that most considered it impossible to take time out from work and provide necessary attention to their child's educational needs.

It has been difficult to work with the local community and capacitate them as an informed collective. Pressures of illiteracy, unawareness and livelihood continue to confine the community to a culture of unaccountability and non-transparency. The initiative is still at a

phase where the focus remains on strengthening the level of awareness. The extent to which these efforts have capacitated the communities to engage with the other stakeholders and work collectively to improve the school education system, can only be assessed after the second phase of implementation. Choosing the community as the entry point has proven to be challenging for the initiative as it has exhibited poor levels of awareness and motivation. The second phase aims at overcoming these challenges by focusing on implementing the scorecards only with the SMCs. This is being considered in view of the understanding that the students, parents/guardians and school staff involved in the committee were much more informed and aware and therefore, most suitable to understand and participate in the exercise.

Absence of strong local implementing partner The presence of a credible local implementation partner is a precondition for the successful implementation of an initiative based on community participation. An implementing partner that has a dominant local presence can influence the level of motivation and involvement of the communities. Its expertise and experience in the region plays a crucial role in determining the appropriateness of an initiative in a given context. The *Grameen Vikas* Trust, as a key implementing agency at the local level, fell short in terms of fulfilling these crucial conditions.

Focus group discussions revealed that the communities were unable to actively participate in the community scorecard exercise. It fell upon the GVT to overcome these challenges and secure maximum participation of the communities. GVT was able to organise the communities and ensure their presence. However, it was unable to strengthen them as a collective that can assert its rights. During the focus group discussions in Kamalura School, it was observed that the community scorecards were filled by the GVT facilitators on behalf of the communities. It was evident that very little had been done to build the self-help capacity of the communities. This defeated the ultimate purpose of implementing social accountability tools, which is participatory performance monitoring by an active citizenry.

CCS has observed that GVT was unable to maintain the level of persistence that was required to effectively realise the goals of the project. This had constrained the pace of implementation at the local level. In view of these challenges, CCS aims at restricting the role of the GVT only to the level of mobilising and organising the communities and ensuring their participation in the meetings.

As part of its plans for the future, CCS aims at involving CfBT as the primary implementation agency, wherein the latter would also be facilitating the implementation of the project besides designing and developing the social accountability tool. In order to improve and accelerate the process of implementation, CfBT and CCS would be employing a local group.

Lessons Learned

The organisation is planning to expand the total coverage of the project to include 50 schools across the districts of Kota and Baran. However, a few key aspects needs to take into consideration.

Expanding the overall coverage

The initiative covered only nine schools in the Kota district. It can be challenging to interpret the findings from the scorecard exercises for the nine schools and negotiate for improvements in the school education system across the district. Moreover, the impact of the intervention may not be substantial to facilitate a dialogue at the policy level.

The project has shown the potential to involve multiple stakeholders and channel collective efforts towards the goals of securing good quality education. By expanding its geographical scope and therefore support base, the initiative can make a greater impact.

Quality of local level implementing partner is important

The sustainability of the project depends upon the local partner and the extent to which its long-term goal aligns itself with that of the initiative. GVT is a local non-proft group that has been working in the region under the corporate social responsibility programme of a private

company. It essentially works in the field of local sanitation development. CfBT has been associated with the organisation for a considerable period of time. It has hired GVT to facilitate its work in the region.

Local level interactions and interviews with CCS revealed that the role of GVT in the initiative is that of concern. It is viewed that persistence in its efforts as a local level implementing agency was inadequate. As a consequence, CCS is planning to employ a member from the local community to lead the project at the village level. This would imply that significant amount of time and effort needs to be invested into training and capacitating the local facilitator to effectively fulfil the requirements of the project.

Involving a local partner with expertise and experience from the relevant sector with a significant level of motivation towards the goal is a crucial pre-condition.

Success Factors

Top-down approach

CCS aimed at securing and strengthening the political support base by involving politicians and government authorities as key stakeholders. This kind of political and bureaucratic mandate facilitated the project to seep through the local governance structure and engage with the communities.

Accessible bureaucracy

With the help of the District Collector, the organisation was able to approach several other key government agents involved in the education sector. His association won them the credibility that played an important role in accessing the district governance arrangement and local power structures.

Expertise of Implementation partner

The expertise and experience of Centre for British Teachers (CfBT) played a significant role in shaping an appropriate implementing strategy. CfBT has the experience of successfully implementing community scorecards in the Anathapur District of Andhra Pradesh.

Maintaining government partnerships-a challenge

Retaining crucial partnerships is a major challenge. In the initial phase of the project, CCS was able to make significant progress with the support and cooperation of government officials. However, the pace of the initiative suffered a huge setback when one of its key stakeholders in the government was transferred from the district and the profile was assigned to a new government official. Losing a crucial source of support in the system affected the initiative significantly. The organisation was forced to divert its efforts towards rebuilding its partnerships with the government arrangement. In this case, it proved to be much more challenging for the organisation because the new official was less supportive towards such an intervention in the region.

Contextualising the implementation strategy

Constructive engagement with the community was not only constrained because of the high levels of illiteracy and lack of adequate civic awareness but also because of ineffective communication. The villagers spoke in hadauti, a local dialect without a written script.

The scorecard was exercised in a way that each participant was expected to indicate against a detailed list of provisions of the RTE Act whether a condition had been fulfilled or not in the primary school. The entire exercise was to be documented in Hindi. However, it became challenging to facilitate the process because of the Hindi/Haduati disconnect and the poor levels of literacy. As a consequence, the organisation decided to incorporate the method of extensive discussions into the implementation strategy. It primarily aimed at capturing individual opinions based on an elaborate method of discussion that used images, local examples and such other tools enabling the villagers to comprehend the information easily.

Securing adequate levels of awareness and mobilising participation

The community scorecard is a participatory performance monitoring tool that depends on active participation by an informed collective of citizen. Several measures were adopted by the government and the civil society to strengthen the level of awareness about RTE and its impact on improving school education system in Kota. While the government led a large-scale awareness campaign promoting RTE, CCS used information meetings, pamphlets and *Kala Jathas* to mobilise the communities, findings from the field indicate that the time invested towards enabling the communities to understand the need for good quality school education may have proved to be inadequate. Especially in terms of motivating the communities to be able to articulate their demands for greater accountability in school management and improvements in the delivery of good quality education.

SMCs have been instituted in several schools; however the field study revealed that parents constituting the committee were incapable of exercising their power because of the lack of confidence to articulate their views effectively. They were also unable to recognise the importance of active participation in the school education system and opined that meeting their day-to-day livelihood needs was far more important.

The field visit enabled the researchers to interact with several such parents/guardians who have taken a keen interest in their child's education and have consistently engaged with teachers to track the progress of the students. It is important to identify these sections of the community and integrate them into the project as anchors of change.

The Act is a new development in the lives of the community. They demand more time to internalise these changes and respond appropriately. The need of the hour is to put greater efforts towards raising the existing level of awareness. The communities have not been able to exhibit the self-help potential needed to utilise a social accountability tool such as community scorecards to its full potential.

ANNEX

Annex 1: About The Implementing Organisation

The Centre for Civil Society is an independent, non-profit, research and educational organization devoted to improving the quality of life for all citizens of India by reviving and reinvigorating civil society. But it doesn't run primary schools, or health clinics, or garbage collection programs. It works differently: It tries to change people's ideas, opinions, mode of thinking by research, seminars, and publications. It is like an idea generation organisation, a think tank that develops ideas to better the world which also wants to usher in an intellectual revolution that encourages people to look beyond the obvious, think beyond good intentions, and act beyond activism.

Annex 2: Interview Questionnaire

Background

1. Centre for Civil Society and Centre for British Teachers are the major stakeholders in project implementation. Could you please clarify their respective roles and responsibilities?

   a. Are there any other stakeholders? If yes, please clarify their role and responsibilities?

2. While it is clear that students and parents, as beneficiaries of RTE, are important in this audit process, and the government's role is critical as service provider. How are teachers involved in this project?

3. Extensive field research was conducted to finalize the project implementation area using four parameters:

   a. Education an issue of interest among community leaders and community members

   b. Pro active community leaders - in this context, Sarpanch of the Gram Panchayat for the 2 villages and ward councilors of the municipal corporation for the peri-urban town

   c. Easy accessibility from the district head quarters.

   d. Proven experience of successful civic awareness campaigns

   What was the rationale for identifying these selection criteria? How was the performance of the districts assessed to shortlist Kota?

4. The project is being implemented in three distinct socio-cultural environments - one tribal, one non-tribal and one peri-urban area. What was the reason for identifying different villages/town?

Social Accountability Tool

5. Social Audit is part of the Right to Education Act, and involves similar process as Community Score Cards, in terms of ensuring quality delivery of services. In such scenario, why was Community Score Cards identified as better Social Accountability tool for RTE project?

   a. How is Community Score Card process different from Social Audits conducted by the government?

Implementation Approach

6. What were the reasons for selecting Centre for British Teachers as local partner?

7. Centre for Civil Society has followed a step-by-step approach to implementation by conducting necessary research to understand the project environment and then interacting with the community. Could you please elaborate on your experience with the research studies undertaken prior to interacting with community?

8. To understand the RTE awareness level, CCS/CfBT, interviewed the major government officials, teachers, parents and also conducted a baseline survey. What was the difference between the two activities?

9. What process was followed to reach out to the community? Where were the awareness campaigns activities held?

10. While it is easier to bring together people in villages for interface meetings, doing similar activities in urban areas are challenging. How does CCS interact with communities in Ward 48 of Kota?

11. What process was followed to design the Community Score Card? What role did the community play in identifying the measurement indicators?

12. Can you please describe the Community Score Card process in terms of conducting the meetings and assigning scores?

    a. Who participates in measuring government's performance?

13. How many schools are being targeted in through this Community Score Card project? Does it include private schools as well?

Participation level

14. CCS interacted has interacted with government stakeholders to facilitate implementation of this project. Was the government (district officials) supportive of the project? If yes, how? If no, why not?

15. How has community reacted to this project? What is the participation level in the communities?

    a. How did you motivate the communities to participate in the score card process?

Outcomes

16. First interface meeting was planned to be in December/January. What were the immediate outcomes of the meeting?

    a. How many interface meetings are planned? How are the dates for the meetings decided?

17. Has there been any change in delivery of services after introduction of this project? Are people more aware of their rights?

Challenges

18. Did CCS/CfBT face any challenges in implementation? If yes, what were they and how did you overcome them?

    a. There has been a delay in project implementation. What are the reasons for the delays?

Stakeholders: Centre for British Teachers

1. Was CfBT involved in the development and design of CSC? If yes, what factors were take into consideration while developing the tool?

2. CCS aims at replicating the successes of your project in Ananthapur. Can you give a brief overview of the project and its implementation process? Does it involve the use of community scorecards?

3. What have been the key factors facilitating the successful implementation of the project in Anathapur?

4. Is the socio-economic and political mileu of the Ananthapur different from Rajasthan? If yes, does this influence the successful replication of the project in a state like Rajasthan?

5. CSC is a participatory performance monitoring tool wherein citizens are involved in evaluating and monitoring public service delivery. Is the implementation of CSC more challenging in the context of Rajasthan as compared to Anathapur? If yes, what have been the major challenges?

6. The discussions with CCS revealed that CfBT will be directly involved in the implementation of the project. How will your role be different in this phase as compared to your earlier experiences of intervention?

7. With a more direct involvement in the implementation of the project, what will be your new approach? What are the primary gaps that CfBT will try to address and how?

8. What in your opinion are the preconditions for the successful implementation of the project in Rajasthan?

Stakeholder: Government

1. What is your role and responsibility in the implementation of Community Score card project on RTE?

2. The government is trying to incorporate social accountability mechanism through provisions such as Social Audit and Right to Information. In your opinion, is Community Scorecard process appropriate in the given socio-economic scenario over the other mechanisms? If yes, why? If no, Why not?

3. How has the Community Scorecard project impacted the quality of education delivery?

4. What are the remaining challenges to universalizing access to better quality primary education?

5. What has been the nature of interactions with the communities prior to the implementation of the project? Discuss.

6. Has the Community Scorecard process facilitated improved dialogue between the communities and the government? If yes, how? If no, why?

7. What have been the outcomes of this form of interaction with regards to the realisation of RTE?

8. How has this dialogue impacted the existing approach of the government towards improving access to better quality elementary education?

9. At present, the project is being implemented in nine schools of Kota. Do you feel there is an opportunity to include more schools in this project?

   a. If yes, are there plans in the government to take up this project?

Additional questions for District Education Officer

1. In recent performance review of schools, has there been any difference in the quality of education in the blocks where this project has been implemented? If yes, please elaborate.

Focus group discussions

SMC

1. How and when were the SMC's constituted?
2. How and why did you become a part of this committee?
3. What are its key functions?
4. When did you become a part of the committee and what is your role?
5. What are the roles of other members?
6. How were these roles and responsibilities allocated and by whom?
7. Do you think it was necessary to constitute these committees? If yes/no, why?

Community Scorecards

Implementation and process

8. What are community scorecards and why were they introduced in the community?
9. How was community scorecards introduced in the community?
10. Did you undergo any training for the same? If yes, can you discuss the nature of these trainings?
11. How is a community scorecard used?
12. Did you face any difficulty? If yes, what was the major challenge and how were these addressed.

Outcomes

13. What have been the major issues confronting elementary education?
14. How has the use of community scorecards helped you address these concerns;

    i. Parents-

    ii. School staff-

    iii. Others-

15. Why do think these issues remained unaddressed prior to this scorecard exercise?

    i. Parents-

    ii. School Staff-

16. What according to you is the role of government in terms of improving the access to better quality elementary education?
17. How has the use of community scorecards helped you understand these functions?
18. Prior to the community scorecards project, have been able to interact with the government authorities about your concerns? What was their response?
19. Have you been able to interact with government authorities following this exercise? if yes,

    i. How was this facilitated and by whom?

    ii. Who were present?

    iii. What were the main issues addressed?

    iv. What was the response of the government?

20. Has the responsiveness of the government authorities improved? If yes, in what ways?
21. According to you, in what ways has this exercise benefited you?

    i. Parents-

    ii. School staff-

    iii. Children-

22. How has exercise improved your awareness about the system of education?

    i. Parents-

    ii. School staff-

    iii. Children-

23. Have you observed improvements in the following;

    i. Education to be free of cost in government schools

    ii. Pupil-teacher ratio

    iii. Duties of teachers

    iv. Twenty- five percent quota for economically weaker sections and disadvantaged groups

    v. Infrastructural norms i.e. building, playground, library, kitchen for mid-day meal etc.

    vi. No child can be detained in any class till class 8

    vii. Ban on corporal punishment

CASE STUDY 3

Empowering Rural People To Seek Their
Entitlements Under Mgnrega To Ensure
Livelihood And Food

Introduction

A large proportion of India's rural population is employed in agriculture - a sector beset with low productivity, high risks, instabilities due to wide fluctuations in agricultural incomes, and a low rate of growth (around two per cent). Most small and marginal farms are not viable since they cannot make net profits from crop cultivation and are, therefore, unable to generate enough incomes. Lack of productive investments in land and infrastructure further inhibit the sector's growth. This section is made up chiefly by the poor at the bottom rung, with low or no assets. They suffer from acute deprivation including starvation and their poverty can be abated by large scale wage employment programme.

Intervention	Capacity Building
Location	Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh
Organisation	Centre for Rural Education and Development Action (CREDA)
Sector	Livelihood and Food Security
Target Audience	Rural poor aged over 18 years
Geographic Scope	Halia block in Mirzapur

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is India's largest employment programme aimed at providing livelihood and food security to rural poor. Considering its decentralised nature, the programme can potentially be of immense value to people at the grassroots. While different states have had varying degrees of success with MGNREGA, Uttar Pradesh has been consistently ranked low on assessment parameters like average person days worked per rural household, average percentage of person days worked by women, MGNREGA wages as percentage of state minimum wages and the composite success of the programme.[1]

The situation is particularly grim in the abysmally backward Halia block of Mirzapur district in Uttar Pradesh where implementation and monitoring have been marred by inefficiency and corruption. The Centre for Rural Education and Development Action (CREDA) launched a project titled *Empowering Rural People for Seeking their Entitlements under MGNREGA to Ensure Livelihood and Food Security* in February 2010. The project was meant to educate poor and marginalised people in 30 *gram panchayats* of Halia about their legal entitlements under MGNREGA to help them secure their livelihoods and food requirements. (A *Panchayat* is the term for locally elected, village self-governance councils, whose administrative jurisdiction is congruous to the geography of village or villages they represent. Panchayats are recognised as the third tier of government by law in India.) It has built a force of 60 village-level youth volunteers and 100 women from self-help groups (SHGs) in addition to 30 village level five-member committees called MGNREGA Sahyog Samiti, one for each gram panchayat. CREDA's project has uniquely involved women and physically and visually challenged people within the fold of MGNREGA. As of March 2012, it has directly benefited nearly 7000 workers across 99 villages under 30 *gram panchayats* in the block (*gram*, meaning village, and *gram panchayats* are village *panchayats*, akin to *panchayat* in usage).

Context

Located on the southern fringe of the Mirzapur district along the state of Uttar Pradesh's border with the neighboring state of Madhya Pradesh, Halia is among the state's most backward blocks. Its woeful governance and public delivery system suffers further because of its remoteness from the district administration headquarter. Its carpet industry is notorious for employing a large number of child laborers. Numerically dominated by people belonging to the Scheduled Caste and to an extent, the Scheduled Tribes, Halia has been a hotbed of politics since the early 1990s. (Scheduled Caste or SCs refers to people for from lower strata of the Hindu caste system or castes mentioned under a special schedule of the Indian Constitution. Similarly, ST or Scheduled Tribes relate to people from tribes specified in a schedule of the Indian Constitution.)

The block level administration is inefficient and its functioning lacks accountability and transparency. Besides, the deeply entrenched caste system tends to be extremely oppressive towards the lower and labour classes. Most of the villages in the area have traditionally been the stronghold of the *zamindari* class (Now abolished, *zamindari* was the feudal system of landlords and the rest of the peasantry and tenants the *zamindar* or landlord presided over). Further, the construction of dams and reservoirs in the 1960s has served to marginalise the *dalits* (untouchables because they belong to the lowest strata in the Hindu caste system) and other local groups even more since they have had to bear the brunt of displacement caused by the submergence of their traditional habitats coupled with the absence of any rehabilitation policy. The topography of Halia is divided by the Adwa reservoir into two the impoverished eastern part is marked by dry, poorly endowed land, inhabited largely by the kol population, a lower caste and the western region, well irrigated, better land endowment and inhabited mainly by the higher castes.

The implementation of MGNREGA in Halia mirrors its social and economic construct. The *gram panchayats* are controlled by the wealthy, propertied classes comprised primarily of the upper castes. The post of the *panchayat pradhan* (or chief or head of *panchayat*) is supposed to be filled on a rotational basis so that members of the SC/ST community get an equal chance of occupying the office. However, in reality, this

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[1] Princeton University. Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. MGNREGA Implementation: A Cross-State Comparison. January 2012. Web. 3 April. 2012. <http://wws.princeton.edu/research/pwreports_fy11/The-Woodrow-Wilson-Schools-Graduate-Policy-Workshop-MGNREGA.pdf/>.

hardly ever happens because of the existing power structures. Since the *panchayat* is the key government unit for the implementation of MGNREGA at the village level, this power imbalance is extremely detrimental to the interests of the SC/ST communities in getting jobs and timely payments without harassment.

Against this background, the Centre for Rural Education and Development Action (CREDA) started a project titled *Empowering Rural People for Seeking Their Entitlements under Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) to Ensure Livelihood and Food Security* in February 2010 to particularly empower the poor and marginalised people in 30 *gram panchayats* of Halia. The project educates the people about their MNREGA entitlements and helps them secure their livelihoods and food requirements.

For this, it has built a force of 60 village-level youth volunteers and 100 women from SHGs in addition to 30 village level five-member committees called MGNREGA *Sahyog Samiti*, one for each *gram panchayat*. An important part of the project is the preparation of a database of families deprived of their entitlements under MGNREGA and documentation of case studies and experiences. So far it has directly benefited nearly 7000 workers across 99 villages under 30 *gram panchayats* in the block.

Social Accountability Process

CREDA's project on social accountability in MGNREGA seeks to sensitise the community members about their rights and entitlements under the Act and check corruption at various levels of implementation that prevents the desired benefits from reaching the beneficiaries.

In accordance with this aim, CREDA utilises a simple yet effective working strategy.

The project strategy targets critical gaps at two levels that have impeded the implementation of MGNREGA: first, lack of capacity at the Panchayat level that inhibits officials from following the Act's standard guidelines; and, second, the lack of awareness among community members about their MGNREGA entitlements that prevents them from demanding employment, wages, facilities and redress

grievances as a matter of right. Accordingly, CREDA employs fairly simple but comprehensive strategies focused on both those deficiencies. The choice of strategies was crucial as the overall literacy level of the block is 41.64 percent (Census 2001), making it difficult for people to grasp and act upon complicated methods.

Salient features of the project

- Launched in February 2010
- Covers 30 *gram panchayats* in Halia block of Mirzapur district
- Aims to secure livelihood and food for people
- Focus on social accountability in MGNREGA implementation
- Formation of MGNREGA *Sahyog Samitis* at *panchayat* level
- Village level operations done by two rural youth volunteers and five women SHG members
- Inclusion of physically challenged people in MGNREGA
- Empowerment of women a priority

Stakeholders in the project

One reason for the success of the project is the equal involvement of community members and government officials. All stakeholders have been trained to understand the potential of MGNREGA, become aware of its provisions and processes and utilise the Right to Information (RTI) for ensuring transparency and accountability in its implementation.

Centre for Rural Education and Development Action (CREDA)	Community members
Panchayat officials-pradhan, rozgar sewaks	Self Help Group women members

Rural youth volunteers
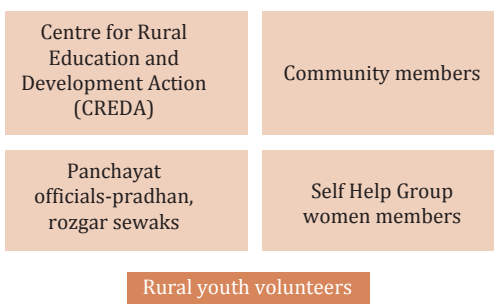
Figure 1: Stakeholders in CREDA's project for social accountability in MGNREGA

Source: OneWorld Foundation India

Implementation strategy

CREDA's comprehensive project involves bringing the government closer to the MGNREGA beneficiaries, increasing constructive interaction between them, building their capacity to utilise the provisions and due processes and creating community resource persons at the panchayat level to make the project sustainable.

Inclusion of government insitutions	• Initiation letters sent to *pradhan* of each of the 30 *gram panchayats* • *Pradhans* and *rozgar sewaks* surveyed to gauge their existing awareness of MGNREGA
Creation of a pool of community resource persons	• Formation of MGNREGA Sahyog Samity, comprising five members, in every *panchayat* • Two rural volunteers selected from every *panchayat* • Three SHG members selected from every *panchayat*
Building community awareness	• 50 villagers surveryed from each *panchayat* to understand their awareness on MGNREGA and their entitlements • Organisation of regular village meetings and awareness rallies • *Gheraos* and *bandhs* developed as modes of protest by community members.
Inclusion of marginalised sections of population	• Empowering women to realise the MGNREGA mandate for inclusion of women as one-third of the wokforce • Inclusion of community members getting financial aid from government under other schemes *viz.* widow and old age pension etc • Unique emphasis on visually and physically challenged
Training	• *Panchayat* officials trained on provisions and due processes of MGNREGA • *Samiti members* rural volunteers and SHG members • Intensive training on RTI for community resource persons • Community members made aware of their rights entitlements, and processes to follow under MGNREGA

Figure 2: CREDA's implementation strategy for its project on social accountability in MGNREGA in Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh

Source: OneWorld Foundation India

IMPACT

In order to study the qualitative impact of CREDA's intervention in Halia, the research team conducted focus group discussions (FGD) with community members and local government officials. Of the 30 *gram panchayats* that CREDA works in, the team interacted with villagers and panchayat officials from Ahungi Kalan, Sikta, Kotranath, Dighiya and Gurgee. While the first three *panchayats* performed well, showing increased overall awareness among community members and responsiveness of the government, the latter two lagged on these counts. The beneficiaries of the project mostly belong to scheduled caste (SC) groups that have traditionally faced discrimination at the social, economic and political levels. Because of this they stand to gain the most from the efficient implementation of MGNREGA-for the same reason they are also the least likely to share their experiences. In this context, it was felt that FGD could prove to be the best tool for eliciting community percepti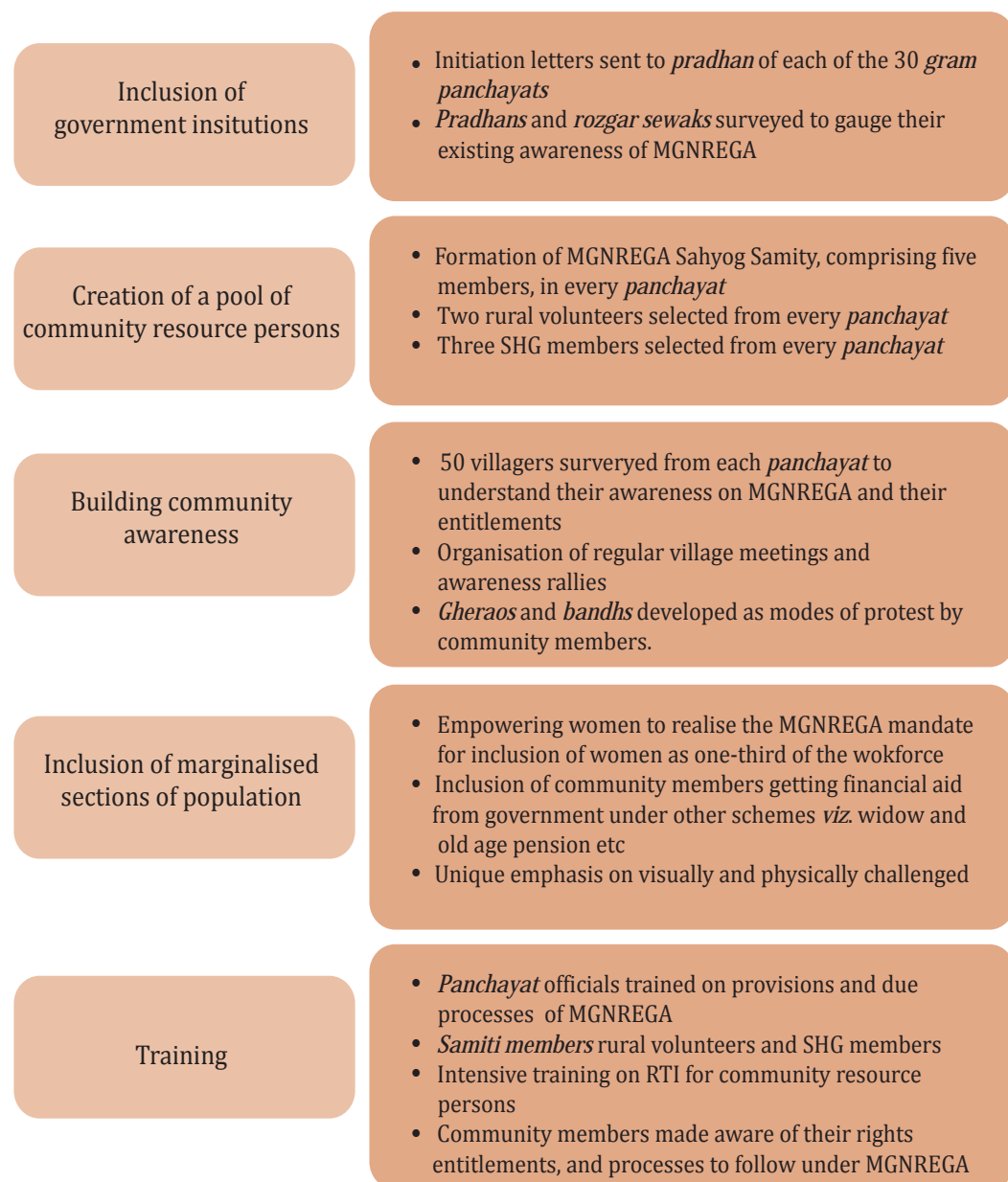ons in an enabling, non-threatening environment. This was, therefore, conducted with 115 villagers across four *panchayats*. Group discussions helped researchers capture the general attitude of the community towards the project guarding against individual biases and gaps in understanding. Further, since the provisions of the Act mandate that women should form at least one-third of the total labour force at any given worksite, almost 57 per cent of the FGD participants were women who shared their experiences without much hesitation.

Each FGD comprised about 23 community members, randomly selected on the basis of their availability. Participants were questioned to gauge their awareness of MGNREGA provisions, their perception of the change that has occurred in their understanding through the project and challenges to the realisation of their rights.

Name of *Gram Panchayat*	Number of participants	Gender		Socio-economic status
		M	F	
Ahungi Kalan	25	10	15	All participants belonged to the Scheduled Caste (SC) groups. Most participants were illiterate with the exception of a few men who had studied till class 8.
Dighiya	15	10	5	Most participants belonged to SC groups. Out of all five FGD's, there were maximum number of educated participants in Dighiya. Two participants were graduates.
Gurgee	20	12	8	All participants belonged to SC groups and were illiterate.
Kotarnath	30	8	22	Most participants belonged to SC groups and were illiterate
Sikta	25	10	15	Most participants belonged to SC groups and were illiterate.
Total	**115**	**50**	**65**	

Table 2: Details of the project areas visited during the field research for this study

Source: OneWorld Foundation India

Semi structured interviews were conducted with CREDA employees to understand the motivation, context and working design of the project. Interviews with local panchayat officials, youth volunteers and women SHG members enabled an understanding of the grassroots operations of the project as well as the challenges faced. At the time of project initiation, CREDA conducted a survey of all 30 village *pradhans* (village headman or head of village *panchayat*), *rozgar sewaks* (or mate, entrusted with maintaining employment records for employments under MGNREGA), and 1500 community members across 30 gram panchayats to understand their level of awareness about the Act. Another survey was conducted after a year to assess the change in the awareness and impact of project strategies. Findings from these two surveys were compared to assess the change that has occurred in the understanding of each of these stakeholders.

Direct interactions with stakeholders at various levels of the project indicated that the project has registered a distinctly positive impact in some of its focus areas and has faced challenges in certain others.

Empowering the community to demand social accountability

Provision of MGNREGA-related information

CREDA's engagement with the local population has made them more aware about their rights and entitlements under MGNREGA. Most of the participants present in the FGD's pointed out how earlier they were unaware of the various provisions and processes under MGNREGA- like that of job card registration, job demand, worksite facilities, maintenance of attendance, provisions for widow's and visually and physically challenged persons within MGNREGA, measurement of work done and subsequent payment of wages and payment of unemployment allowance. The absence of such information made the community highly vulnerable in the hands of local authorities and often led to the denial of their legally endowed entitlements under MGNREGA.

In Ahungi Kalan *gram panchayat*, Rs 700,000 were due for work that had been done over the past two years under MGNREGA(Rs 57 to 1 US $). In spite of repeated requests by villagers (mostly lower castes), the local authorities refused to pay up. As a result, villagers along with SHG members, youth volunteers and their representatives in the local *panchayat* organised a *gherao* at the Block Development Office (the government office the block level, covering a number of villages) resulting in an apology from the *panchayat pradhan.* This collective community pressure also resulted in the payment of Rs 500,000 as wages to workers. For the balance amount the villagers plan to organise another *gherao* soon.

However, CREDA's involvement with the community over the past two years has successfully modified the situation. Not only has CREDA spread awareness about MGNREGA processes among community members but has also helped them claim their benefits. It has helped community members register their job card, demand work and get paid on time. It is estimated that about 75 people have either received or registered for job cards in each of the target villages post CREDA's involvement. Therefore roughly about 7, 425 in total have received or registered for job card across the 30 panchayats. In one such instance, in Ahungi Kalan *gram panchayat*[2], due to pressure from the villagers, authorities were compelled to pay pending payments up to Rs 500,000 (Rs 57 to 1 US$).

Also noteworthy is CREDA's success in finding jobs for the visually and physically challenged under MGNREGA, which so far had been denied to them. As a part of CREDA's initiative, physically and visually challenged persons numbering 225 and 820 respectively have been surveyed. Of the physically challenged 35 applied for job cards and 20 got employment. Similarly, 24 visually challenged persons applied for job cards and eight got employment. CREDA has also enabled widows and elderly to get their entitled benefits under MGNREGA. As a result, 27 widows and 26 elderly people have received employment.

[2.] Based on CREDA's inputs

By equipping the community with adequate information, CREDA has strengthened its confidence. They now collectively pressurise local authorities to deliver services within MGNREGA in a transparent and accountable manner.

Creating a pool of leaders in the community

CREDA works with 60 youth volunteers, 100 SHG women and the *Sahyog Samitis*. In every *Panchayat*, a team of 10 people - two youth volunteers, three SHG women and five members of the *Sahyog Samiti* - is trained and made responsible for creating awareness in the community and helping it demand accountability from officials on MGNREGA. CREDA is, therefore, creating a pool of informed citizen leaders at the village level who along with growing personally are also becoming an asset to the community. This was evident during the FGDs, when the volunteers and SHG women were encouraging and guiding the community to speak up. These leaders are able to successfully motivate the community and engage confidently with government officials. In this process, the volunteers and SHG women have assisted many villagers in getting their job cards, demanding work and fighting for the payment of their wages on time. This interaction is expanding their understanding of local realities and empowering them to demand accountability not just with respect to MGNREGA but with various other aspects of local governance. In future, this potential can be successfully leveraged to the community's advantage.

Empowerment of women

A striking feature of CREDA's intervention in Halia is its impact on rural women. Not only are the women better informed, they are also noticeably confident. In all five FGD's, women willingly shared experiences of exploitation and denial of rights. The women showed much greater awareness about their entitlements and their ability to spread the same around them. They are also vocal about the facilities that should be given to them in the worksites; about how they cannot be denied their right to work under MGNREGA if they are widows or lactating mothers. Further, they no longer hesitate to confront local authorities, even those belonging to upper castes, with forms of protests like *gheraos* (surrounding) and *morchas* (campaigns) to fight for their rightful entitlements. This is a step up from days when they would shy away from even approaching men for information.

Itwari Devi an elderly woman from Sikta *gram panchayat* receives old-age pension. This was being used as a pretext by local authorities to deny her a job under MGNREGA in spite of the fact that she is fit to work. Itwari Devi with the help of CREDA and community volunteers was able to pressure the authorities and get a job card. Though she is yet to receive work under MGNREGA, she is now more aware about her legal right and does not hesitate to confront the *pradhan* with her demand for a job. Like Itwari Devi, there are many women who are fighting for their rights confidently. They not only demand work but also timely and better wages and worksite facilities. They are ready to adopt aggressive means if needed to secure their rights. Most women agree that CREDA has empowered them collectively with the information they needed.

Overcoming social barriers

As the composition of the FGD's points out (see table 2), most participants belonged to lower caste groups. It is this social exclusion that CREDA is successfully motivating the community to fight against. The deeply entrenched caste system in these *Gram Panchayats* coupled with problems of illiteracy and ignorance makes the situation more oppressive for the lower castes. Since most *Panchayat Pradhans* belong to upper castes, it becomes increasingly difficult for members of lower caste groups to voice their problems and demand their entitlements under MGNREGA. CREDA's engagement with the community is gradually addressing this problem of social exclusion as was evident during the FGDs, where members of local caste groups were voicing their concerns to the *Pradhans* belonging to upper castes. The members from the lower castes demonstrated that they can not only confidently engage upper caste local authorities, but also, if needed, confront them with aggressive means. Hitherto socially oppressed villagers are using their new found awareness to stand up for their entitlements. Another sign of this empowerment is the fact

that many of members of lower caste communities are now a part of the village Panchayat. In the past, SC members were hesitant to stand for *Panchayat* elections fearing repression from upper caste Panchayat members. However, SC groups are gradually realising how holding leadership roles can help them sensitise the village *Panchayat* to their needs and curb social, economic and political oppression.

Empowering the local government to be accountable

Capacity building of local government officers

Along with engaging the community, CREDA is also trying to engage with local government authorities in the targeted *Gram Panchayats*. After undertaking initial awareness level assessment interviews with the *Pradhans* of relevant *Gram Panchayats*, CREDA found that the awareness of *Pradhans* about their duties and the entitlements due to villagers under MGNREGA was limited. With time, CREDA has used awareness raising materials like booklets and posters to educate the *Pradhans* and motivate them to function in a transparent manner. In the FGD's most *pradhans* acknowledged their earlier ignorance and expressed willingness to work towards a transparent and accountable mode of delivering benefits under MGNREGA.

Streamlining MGNREGA implementation processes

There are widespread discrepancies in the implementation of MGNREGA right from job card registration to payment of wages in all the concerned *gram panchayats*. In order to address these gaps, CREDA is developing new, villager-friendly processes of implementing MGNREGA. CREDA now provides job card registration and job demand forms to villagers, which is helping speed up the application process and also encouraging more villagers to apply. Earlier the villagers were dependant on the discretion of the panchayat officials to get these forms, but now they can access them directly through CREDA. Besides, the villagers are not given any document acknowledging their demand for jobs.

CREDA is pushing to ensure that villagers get such acknowledgement slips, which could be used to make the official in-charge accountable for refusal of job requests on false grounds or for demanding unemployment allowance. Such steps are limiting the scope for discrepancies in MGNREGA implementation.

> Munnalal, 35, belongs to the lower caste community in Ahungi Kalan. Fed up with caste politics, he decided to run in the local *Panchayat* elections despite warnings from his community members of dire consequences at the hands of the upper castes. Today Munna is a member of the Ahungi Kalan *Gram Panchayat* and is the voice of the lower castes. Though he faces constant hurdles in decision making and accepts that caste barriers often limit his operating potential, it does not deter him from motivating his community to fight for what is rightly theirs. Munna has learnt to file a Right to Information (RTI) application and uses it as an empowering tool to find out details about work and funds under MGNREGA. He also does not hesitate in mobilising the community to openly confront authorities and leads them in organising *gheraos* and *morchas*.

Strengthening community and government interaction

It is too early to say that CREDA's intervention has increased the accountability of the local government in the targeted *panchayats*. But it is evident that the interaction between the community and the local government is greater than before. At every FGD and interview, this was reflected in the exchange between villagers and *panchayat* members. While the villagers are now more aware and confident in dealing with the government, the authorities are also more informed and receptive to villagers' concerns and queries.

Level of Participation

Though MGNREGA is a Constitutionally-protected rights-based, demand-driven employment programme, its implementation in different states has certainly not been uniformly successful. One reason for this is the poor level of community participation although CREDA's intervention has substantially increased the awareness, interest, and participation of community members. It has, therefore, suggested that people are keen to demand adequate work and timely payment as a right, not privilege.

Change in women's social roles

The MNREGA stipulates that one-third of its beneficiaries ought to be women in an effort to correct a historic anomaly wherein women seldom had access to paid employment. Such historical biases are particularly severe in backward areas like Halia where many poor women suffer both on account of their gender and caste in the confines of their homes with no avenue for airing their grievances. Under MGNREGA, women in Halia were discouraged from seeking employment, widows in different age groups were excluded in the distribution of job cards and nursing mothers were particularly discriminated against since they required more frequent breaks at work. Moreover, women were made to work more than men at substantially lower wages. Following CREDA's intervention, however, women in all five panchayats expressed a clear understanding of the main provisions under MGNREGA, their entitlements under it, the safeguards against exploitation and the right to approach authorities for redressing their grievances.

Inclusion of the visually and physically challenged

MGNREGA seeks to provide guaranteed employment of 100 days annually to all sections of rural population. But, the visually and physically challenged have been generally excluded from the programme on the pretext that they are unable to do any physical labour. This marginalisation has largely escaped the notice of even the administration and community-based organisations. CREDA has brought them within the fold of the programme by making them aware of their equal rights to seek employment according to their physical capacities. A cross-*panchayat* survey of 225 physically challenged and 820 visually challenged villagers was conducted. Many of them have received job cards though few have been allotted work.

Key Challenges and Mitigation Measures

MGNREGA, undoubtedly the world's largest and most significant productive employment programme, has acquired political legitimacy in India and shown varying degrees of success in states across the country. However, a programme of this magnitude is bound to face challenges on many fronts - government, administration, community, social structures, contractors and so on. CREDA's project has consistently faced challenges in Halia, many of which have not yet been resolved successfully.

Gurgee *gram panchayat* has traditionally been headed by an upper caste *pradhan* even though majority of the villagers there belong to the kol community. In the state gram panchayat elections in October 2010, Gurgee received its first *pradhan* belonging to the kol community. The villagers indicated that substantial courage for the same came from their better understanding of their rights and the potential of electoral processes to bring about a change.

Social structure of the block

43.34 percent (Census 2001) of Halia's population belongs to the scheduled caste community. However, most *gram panchayats* are headed by *pradhans* belonging to the upper castes. The traditional exploitation of the SCs is, therefore, evident in the realm of MGNREGA as well. Lower caste group members have often been denied job cards and work allocation, made to work more for lesser wages and been subjected to delays in wage payments.

Consistent and extensive interactions with community members enabled CREDA to make them aware of their rights and entitlements under MGNREGA and the knowledge that these benefits must accrue to them without any discrimination on the basis of their caste affiliations. The Act's provisions are constitutionally protected and the villagers are now significantly empowered to defend their rights against any discrimination by the more dominant caste groups.

Unavailability of sufficient work and injudicious work allocation

To widen the scope of asset creation under MGNREGA, the programme has been tied to other government schemes related to agriculture, water and land resources, forests and rural roads. Concomitantly, most of the

work is undertaken by the Public Works Department (PWD) and the Forests Department. However, the number of people registered for work under any scheme largely surpasses the number of people required to complete the work. Therefore, even though many villagers are more aware of their rights and have received their job cards owing to project intervention, there is widespread disillusionment caused by paucity of work. Further, the work allocated under the Forests Department is usually far from the village and transportation facilities are not provided to workers by the government. Owing to the presence of wild animals and lack of safe shelters for children, such work has few takers. This further reduces the work effectively taken up by villagers.

Moreover, in some instances, MGNREGA work has been allocated at times when agricultural activities are at their prime, as during the harvest season. Since the majority of villagers are agricultural workers, they are unable to participate in the work under MGNREGA. Inappropriate timing of work allocation has often proven to be a major deterrent to people's interest in the programme.

As the interaction between community members and the government officials has increased, the former are now able to present their concerns about work allocation and such like in a more precise manner, and, with greater chances of getting them addressed.

Weak regional networking from village to the district level

For effectively redressing the community's concerns, many issues require action at administrative levels, beyond the village and gram panchayat. The project does not include intervention at the block and district levels. However, as was witnessed in Ahungi Kalan *panchayat*, it has created sufficient awareness among community members, particularly women, to agitate against the Block Development Officer (BDO is the officer of the state government the block level, covering a number of villages).

Lessons Learned

The project has been under implementation for nearly two years and has seen varied successes as well as challenges. Important lessons have emerged from these trends in the implementation and monitoring of MGNREGA in the Halia block.

Awareness need not translate into provision of services

The most significant achievement of CREDA's project has been generation of awareness about MGNREGA among a community that has traditionally been discriminated against on various counts. However, awareness and mobilisation has not yet resulted in the government providing facilities that are due to workers under the Act provisions. For instance, there has been no instance of workers having access to tents and crèche in the entire block to tend to children while women work at the site. Some worksites do have provision for drinking water. Further, there have been no cases of payment of unemployment benefit so far. These examples indicate that, in order to yield practical results, awareness needs to be accompanied by augmentation in the capacities of people to push for reforms at an accelerated pace.

Success Factor Specific focus on prioritising the role of women in MGNREGA and their potential to act as agents of change has reaped major benefits. Where women had traditionally been relegated to the patriarchal household, they are now engaging in direct interactions with men at various levels of authority in order to secure their rights. This has provided numerical strength and perseverance to the agitation. Lactating mothers and widows were particularly discriminated against. Emphasis on their rights reflects that the project has taken care of different kinds of discrimination and exploitation in the villages. Further, the inclusion of visually and physically challenged villagers has lent credibility and uniqueness to the project efforts.

Similarly, awareness about the scheme provisions and procedures has seen a significant rise among *panchayat* officials. However, it has not directly translated into facilities for the workers despite the political will. This is

primarily because their efforts to bring change often get arrested at levels of administration above that of a panchayat. Therefore, capacity building and sensitization initiatives need to progressively flow upwards.

However, awareness of rights creates an ethos of knowing and demanding entitlements among the community members even if it does not translate into immediate reforms. Its impact extends to not just MGNREGA but to other social security schemes as well. Interaction with villagers in Halia reveals their enhanced awareness about National Rural Health Mission, Integrated Child Development Scheme, Indira *Awas Yojana* (a government housing scheme for the poor) and such like. It was also noted that tying together the advocacy initiatives on various schemes leads to an increase in the credibility of the implementing agency as well since people consider the latter as being concerned with their holistic development. However, the impacts of such an approach on the efficacy of the project remain to be seen.

Cooperation of service providers is necessary

CREDA's project employs a simple implementation strategy but one that has been effective since it involves equal participation of government officials at the *panchayat* level and the community members. At the time of project initiation, simultaneous efforts were made to gauge the existing knowledge on MGNREGA of both these stakeholders. Awareness generation, sensitisation and capacity building efforts have been targeted at both. This strategy is based on the realisation that securing support of service providers, in this case the government, is critical to the project. For instance, owing to *panchayat'*s support to securing people's livelihood rights in Ahungi Kalan, the village has now become a model of success. Equally, in Gurgee, since the *pradhan* belonged to a higher caste that discriminated against lower castes, project impact has been limited.

Top-down implementation of a scheme does not necessarily compromise its decentralised nature

Even though the design of a scheme like MGNREGA is bottom up, favourable performance requires effective top-down administrative capacity. The implementation strategy for MGNREGA differs in different states of the country. In Uttar Pradesh, significant responsibility has been entrusted to the staff at the gram panchayat level. While this can imply that the programme would be more in touch with the grassroots, it does not take into account the fact that gram panchayats are often not equipped with sufficient resources, skills or experience required for efficiently carrying out MGNREGA-related responsibilities. This has significantly limited the quality of performance and impact of the programme.

It is the combined strength of district, block and *gram panchayat* administrative and organisational capacity that appears to be a determining factor of success in social protection schemes like MGNREGA. In contrast to Uttar Pradesh, MGNREGA's favourable performance in India's southern state of Tamil Nadu is mainly due to effective top-down administrative capacity, although this contrasts with the intended bottom-up nature envisaged for the programme. While the stringent reporting requirements and safeguards that Tamil Nadu has put in place prevent leakages and corruption, they also put immense burden on the staff.

If planning of MGNREGA work is done in consultation with the community members and it is strictly monitored at higher administrative levels, there is potential for creating a unique synergy between the government and citizens. It would lead to better implementation of the programmme without compromising on its decentralised character.

Community based organisations hold potential to complement government

Complementary processes employed by CBOs can effectively bolster the state's efforts to implement MGNREGA. For instance, CREDA provides job application forms to villagers since

the *panchayat* often does not have them and, therefore, many times jobs are allocated to villagers by word of mouth, which makes it even tougher for them to claim their wages.

Potential for Scale-Up

Even though the project does not employ many formal tools of social accountability, its impact has been substantial till now in terms of raising people's awareness and the capacity of the government as well as villagers to understand the nuances of MGNREGA. *Pradhans* from *panchayats* outside the area of intervention have approached CREDA for inclusion. There are no current plans for geographical expansion of the project. However, informally these *panchayats* have received training by rural youth volunteers.

Considering the impact the project has had without the use of formal social accountability tools, it is reasonable to suggest that inclusion of such tools could vastly enhance its effectiveness. Currently, though community members have good understanding of their entitlements, their ability to affect change is limited. This is because of the prevalence of a multiple-tiered administrative structure for redressing grievances and their lack of knowledge as to whom to approach for a particular issue. Social accountability tools have the potential to facilitate direct interaction between service providers and recipients. However, in a caste-dominated context like Halia, it is important to analyse the most effective entry points, the existing and required capacities for the project and synergy between state and society, for arriving at the appropriate combination of social accountability tools.

Till now, the project has been limited to the *panchayat* level. For effective and sustainable change, it needs to be ensured that administrative hindrances at the block and district level are removed. Expansion of the project to include advocacy at the district and block levels has the potential to enhance its impact and reach. Along with this, administrative capacity at these levels would also require enhancement.

ANNEX

Annex 1: About The Implementing Organisation

Centre for Rural Education and Development Action (CREDA) was established in the year 1982 by a group of social workers and activists to work for the development of rural poor through various need-based programs. CREDA's objective is to work towards the development and empowerment of socially and economically backward communities through community participation and program intervention. CREDA has in dept knowledge and expertise in the field of human rights, child rights and mobilizing community against injustice. For example, CREDA worked as a member on several policy making and advisory committees such as Uttar Pradesh State Government, Ministry of Labor and Employment, National Commission on Labor, Planning Commission and Ministry of Human Resource Development, government of India. The capacity of the organization for empowering people for their right and justice has been documented nationally and internationally. Centre for Rural Education and Development Action (CREDA) worked on Empowering rural people for seeking their entitlements under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) to ensure livelihood and food security in Halia block of Mirzapur district, India.

Annex 2: Interview Questionnaire

Background

1. When exactly was the project started?
2. What were the criteria for choosing Halia block as the site of project intervention?
3. What were the existing challenges to accountability and transparency in the implementation and monitoring of MGNREGA in Halia prior to project initiation? Answer this with regard to the following heads:

   i. Political accountability (level of corruption)

   ii. Administrative accountability (unclear procurement rules and processes)

   iii. Financial accountability (lack of transparency in budget allocation)
4. According to our research, there are six stakeholders in the project. What are their exact roles and responsibilities?

   i. Centre for Rural Education and Development Action (CREDA)

   ii. Rural youth volunteers

   iii. Women self help group members

   iv. Community based organisations

   v. *Panchayat* officials

   vi. Community members
5. Are there any other stakeholders in the project? If yes, what are their exact roles?

Project strategies

Mobilisation and awareness building

6. What was the level of people's awareness about MGNREGA prior to the implementation of the project? Please provide data on the awareness about their rights and entitlements under the scheme.
7. What mechanisms were/are adopted by CREDA to enlist higher participation of community members under NREGA?
8. What has been the impact of these mechanisms on people's awareness and participation?

Capacity building

9. According to our research, CREDA emphasises on building the capacity of the stakeholders involved in the project. What form of training is provided to each of the following stakeholders?

   i. PRI members

   ii. Rural youth volunteers

   iii. Women SHG workers

   iv. Community members
10. What has been the impact of such trainings/workshops on each of these stakeholders?
11. Please provide information on the number of training sessions and workshops organised, their exact content, participants' average profile, and resource persons.

Social accountability tools

12. What social accountability tools are being utilised under the project?
13. Why have these been considered the most relevant in this context?
14. Which of these tools have been the most and least successful in Halia? Please provide reasons for both.
15. Are there any other tools that are due to be introduced under the project? Please provide details of the same.
16. Have there been any interface meetings with the government? What were the primary conclusions of these meetings?
17. What is a MGNREGA *Sahyog Samiti*?

    i. Who are the constituent members of it?

    ii. What are the primary functions of these associations?

    iii. How many such associations are currently in operation and in which villages?

    iv. What are the most significant achievements of these associations?

    v. What are the most noteworthy challenges faced by these associations? How were/are these overcome?

Monitoring and evaluation

18. How is the project's performance monitored internally as well as externally?

Impact

19. What have been the major achievements of the project?

20. In which arenas has the project met with least success? What were the reasons for this?
21. Working in direct interaction with government authorities often poses a hindrance to information procurement from different departments owing to non-cooperation from implementing staff. Was this the case with this project as well? How was this dealt with?
22. What are/have been the other major challenges faced by the project in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the project? What is/was the approach followed for overcoming them?

PRI Members

1. What is your involvement in the MGNREGA project implemented by CREDA?
2. The programme has been in operation for approximately two years now. What is your opinion regarding awareness about the programme among community members? Do you think there is a need for more awareness generation and training?
   i. If yes, why? How do you think it should be carried out?
   ii. If no, why not?
3. What are the biggest changes you have seen in the past year in terms of:
   i. Community members' awareness of MGNREGS and their entitlements
   ii. Workers' involvement in the monitoring process - participation in social audits, community score cards etc.
   iii. Creation of local community assets
   iv. Processing of job demands
   v. Grievance redressal
4. Has the project established a clear information/process flow between the community and the panchayat administration?
5. How far has the project succeeded in:
   i. Tackling corruption in provision of jobs, payment of wages etc
   ii. Increasing transparency in the implementation of MGNREGS
   iii. Increasing administrative accountability to the citizens

6. From the government's perspective, what have been the major challenges to the project thus far?
   i. Have these been overcome? How?
   ii. If not, how do you propose to deal with them?
7. In your opinion, what are the major factors that have contributed to the project's success?
8. Has the project made your work easier in any way? Has it posed a challenge to your functioning in any form?
9. Do you recommend any changes for better implementation of the project?

Rural youth volunteers and women SHG members

1. What is your role in the project implemented by CREDA to empower people for their rights and entitlements under MGNREGA in Halia?
2. What is your background in terms of education and professional qualifications?
3. On what basis were you selected?
4. How many villages/panchayats do you work in?
5. What, according to you, was the necessity of the project in Halia? Which key problem in MGNREGA implementation does it monitor?
6. Was any training provided to you under this project? If yes, please provide details.
   i. Has the training imparted by CREDA helped you in any other sphere of your work?
7. What have been the major achievements of the project?
8. How far has the project succeeded in:
   i. Tackling corruption in provision of jobs, payment of wages etc
   ii. Increasing transparency in the implementation of MGNREGS
   iii. Increasing administrative accountability to the citizens
9. What were/are the major challenges faced by the project? How were/are these overcome?

10. What changes has the project made in terms of women's participation and empowerment?

11. What impact has the project had on the empowerment of visually and physically handicapped?

12. Do you recommend any changes for better implementation of the project?

CREDA survey questionnaire

Name:

Village:

Block:

District:

Gender: Male / Female

1. What is your age?
    a. <18
    b. 18-25
    c. 26-40
    d. 41-60
    e. >60

2. What is your level of literacy?
    a. Illiterate
    b. Can read and write
    c. Primary Education (up to 5th)
    d. Secondary Education (up to 10th)
    e. Senior Secondary Education (up to 12th)
    f. Graduate

3. Please choose of the following that best describes your income status?
    a. BPL
    b. APL

4. Have you attended any meetings organised by CREDA?
    a. Yes
    b. No

5. If yes, how many times?
    a. 1-2
    b. 3-5
    c. <5

6. What were the hitherto existing challenges to the implementation of MGNREGA prior to project initiation?
    a. Not aware of entitlements and processes
    b. Denial/unfairness in job allocations
    c. Delay in wage payments
    d. Attendance manipulation/irregularity in muster roll maintenance
    e. Inadequate facilities at worksites
    f. Exclusion of women/handicapped
    g. Discrimination on caste basis
    h. Other ………………

7. What did you learn from these meetings?
    a. Rights/entitlements under MGNREGA
    b. MGNREGA processes- job demand etc
    c. Payment of pending wages
    d. Empowerment of women
    e. Inclusion of physically challenged
    f. Other ………………..

8. Have you attended any of the rallies/*marches/gheraos* organised by CREDA?
    a. Yes
    b. No

9. Have you attended any training sessions/workshops organised by CREDA for improving your understanding of MGNREGA?
    a. Yes
    b. No

10. Has your interaction with government officials increased?
    a. Yes
    b. No

11. Is the *panchayat* more responsive towards redressal of your grievances related to MGNREGA?
    a. Yes
    b. No

12. Have you ever filed an RTI application?
    a. Yes
    b. No

13. How did you acquire training for filing RTI applications?
    a. CREDA staff
    b. Youth volunteers
    c. SHG members
    d. Mate
    e. Panchayat officials
    f. Other ……………..

14. What did you file the RTI application for? ……………………..

15. Has the government responded to your RTI application?
    a. Yes
    b. No

16. Are you satisfied with the government's response?
    a. Yes
    b. No

17. How have you benefitted by CREDA's project?
    a. Raised awareness of your rights under MGNREGA
    b. Checked corruption in government officials
    c. Enhanced community participation
    d. Timely payment of wages
    e. Empowerment of women/handicapped
    f. Other _____

18. Your overall awareness of your rights and entitlements under MGNREGA has increased.
    a. Agree
    b. No change
    c. Disagree
    d. Cannot say

19. The government is more transparent and accountable for its performance with regard to MGNREGA now.
    a. Agree
    b. No change
    c. Disagree
    d. Cannot say

20. The project has enhanced possibilities of community's participation in implementation and monitoring of MGNREGA.
    a. Agree
    b. No change
    c. Disagree
    d. Cannot say

CASE STUDY 4
Developing Culture of Good Governance
and Accountability

Introduction

Enacted in 2005, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is an important social safety net legislation that emphasises on accountability mechanisms for effectiveness. Laws like the Right to Information Act (RTI) and tools like social audits were expected to thwart systemic corruption and fraud. However, social audits did not function as intended due to structural issues: *Panchayats*, responsible for implementing MGNREGA, were also actively involved in conducting social audit bringing to the fore a conflict of interests. (A *panchayat* is the term for locally elected, village self-governance councils, whose administrative jurisdiction is congruous to the geography of village or villages they represent. *Panchayats* are recognised as the third tier of government by law in India.) Further, the prevalent socio-cultural

Intervention	Community Scorecard
Location	Rajasthan
Organisation	Consumer Unity and Trust Society
Sector	Livelihood– National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
Target Audience	Rural households, MGNREGA beneficiaries
Geographic Scope	66 *panchayats* in 33 districts of *Rajasthan*

environment did not promote accountability; instead it discouraged people from questioning authority. Conducting genuine social audits require intervention of civil society organisations to ensure transparency and community participation in the process.

Therefore, the Consumer Action, Research and Training Center (CART) at Consumer Unity and Trust Society (CUTS) initiated a social accountability project around the concept of Community Scorecards (CSC) for the efficient implementation of MGNREGA. The intervention targeted state-wide execution by devising a pyramid-like structure. Master trainers were equipped at state level to train 66 civil society organisation (CSO) facilitators for mobilising the community and conducting the CSC exercise.

With several years of relevant experience on its side, CART went about identifying its partners and field areas methodically. It leveraged its own network, and ensured that the *panchayats* met the pre-conditions necessary for successful CSC exercise. Among the factors considered were existing problems with MGNREGA, availability of beneficiaries and support of service providers and trained/informed facilitators.

Over two years, CART has proved the viability of large-scale social accountability intervention by conducting the CSC exercise in 66 *panchayats*. The feedback from the exercise is being used to advocate reforms at the state level and institutionalise CSC as an accountability mechanism in government projects. Despite achieving its objectives, the project has fallen short with respect to the larger goal of developing a culture of good governance and accountability. This study highlights the innovative strategy of CUTS-CART and its impact.

Context

Enacted in 2005, MGNREGA guarantees 100 days of employment for every rural household and is India's largest social safety-net programme. RTI aims to leverage upon a decentralised structure of governance to remove the shortcomings that have traditionally plagued the implementation of development programme in India. MGNREGA is largely funded by the

Central Government and managed by the panchayats which are in-charge of planning and implementation, end-to-end, from identifying work to allocating responsibility and supervising progress. Further, the provisions of proactive information disclosure under RTI and social audits are included to foster greater accountability and transparency. The Act states that *panchayats* are obligated to "make available all relevant documents including the muster rolls, bills, vouchers, measurement books, copies of sanction orders and other connected books of account and papers to the *Gram Sabha* for the purpose of conducting the social audit.[1]" (A *Gram Sabha* is an assembly of village adults mandated by the *Panchayati Raj* Act.)

Despite such measures, however, the efficiency in service delivery has reduced over the years because of large-scale corruption in procurement and payment of wages. Social audit was expected to promote the involvement of the community in monitoring and evaluation and the people-centric approach, facilitated by CSOs, did serve to expose corrupt practices in Rajasthan. However, the *sarpanchs*, who head the elected *panchayats*, felt threatened by the increased transparency and approached the Rajasthan High Court to stop external interference in the social audit process. As such, the Social Audit became a *panchayat*-owned activity, without any serious citizen participation.

The purpose of such audit is to examine the public expenditure and identify leakages, but in cases where the power of scrutiny lies with the implementing agency itself, the intended outcome of the accountability process is bound to be limited. Further, these audits do not necessarily find solutions to the problems. Therefore, to facilitate citizen-centric accountability, the CART centre at CUTS started an initiative involving the use of CSC to engage service providers and citizens to resolve mutual concerns.

Established in 1996, CART works "towards enabling people, especially women and other disadvantaged groups of society to assert their rights through a strong consumer movement." Having successfully executed several pilots on Social Accountability (SA), CART aimed at an

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[1] http://nrega.nic.in/rajaswa.pdf

ambitious state-level programme to promote a culture of good governance by introducing a sustainable model jointly with "other CSOs and trying to institutionalise it for assessing the various schemes." The project focused on MGNREGA Act as it is among Rajasthan's largest public expenditure programs.

CART identified following objectives to achieve its goal:

- Develop 14 master-trainers of CSC and 66 CSC facilitators. The trainers were equipped to conduct CSC independently in MGNREGA in all 33 districts of Rajasthan.
- Generate fresh data regarding the implementation of MGNREGA from all 33 districts within18 months.
- Enhance MGNREGA record of service delivery by establishing a better mechanism for ensuring transparency and accountability within 24 months

Social Accountability Process

Identifying civil society organisations

Over years CART has built a network of organisations with experience of working on governance issues at the village level. Out of 1000 such organisations, a small number was evaluated for its interest and knowledge of governance. Capacity gap analysis was conducted to assess their level of understanding of governance and to identify areas that would require more resources to build capacities. Only organisations with interest and basic capability for the project were selected. Consequently, 66 CSOs were included in CART's governance network.

Training of master trainers

To facilitate implementation, master trainers, who were to in turn train the CSO facilitators, were put through a five-day training session. Twenty-nine people from India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Zambia participated in the training on the CSC process. The 'Training of the Trainers' programme followed a curriculum developed by CUTS, which included:

- Introduction to governance and accountability
- Community scorecard tool
- Input tracking scorecard
- Community generated performance scorecard
- Service provider self-evaluation scorecard
- Interface meeting
- Field-exercise on CSC

The goal was to capacitate individuals to carry out the training themselves at the divisional level.
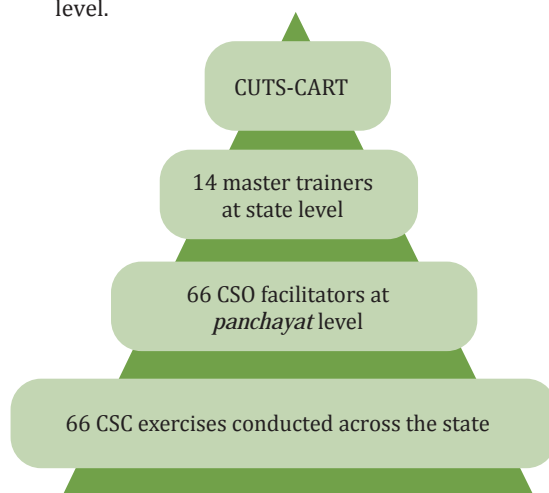
Figure 1: Implementation Strategy adopted by CUTS

Training of CSO

Seven divisional sessions followed for the 66 CSO facilitators, selected to implement the CSC exercise in their areas. Training adhered to a uniform five-day module - three days in a classroom and two-days on field. Repeat scorecard exercises were conducted where required. In addition, refresher course was conducted for CSOs few months into the programme.

Community Scorecard Exercises

After training, the facilitators conducted the community scorecard exercise in their respective *panchayats*. Each CSO was responsible for conducting two CSCs. In the process, the CSO started with preparatory work at the ground level in the identified panchayats. Since these CSOs belonged to the community,

they were easily accepted. They initiated village level awareness campaigns to sensitise the community about the project. Alongside, the facilitators met and persuaded service providers to participate in the project. In case it proved impossible to get the support of service providers, then the CSC exercise was moved to another *panchayat*.

CSC activities were conducted in two panchayats in all 33 districts and interface meetings were held with government officials to share concerns. During these meetings, the service providers and the community ranked the service providers on various components of the service delivery. Alongside, concerns of the service providers and communities were discussed. Such open interaction allowed both to resolve their grievances and develop an action plan for the future.

Figure 2: Community scoring of the delivery of the governance apparatus on the key provisions of MGNREGA

Figure 3: Self-evaluation by service providers of their performance in delivering the key provisions of MGNREGA.

The action plan for each component was written, with specified time period and responsible authority. In Malpura block in Tonk District, the scorecard and action plan were displayed in *panchayat* office.

Figure 4: Action Plan derived through a constructive engagement between the service providers and recipients enumerating the roles and responsibilities of governance apparatus

Dissemination of findings and advocacy

In its course, the project generated fresh data on the implementation of MGNREGA in Rajasthan. A state-level dissemination workshop was held in Jaipur to share experiences with relevant stakeholders. The data mined during this exercise was shared with the government representatives.

CART plans to regularly advocate with the state government with the feedback data collected from the community to improve the service delivery at state level. The results of CSC showed that beneficiaries are largely dissatisfied with the MGNREGA execution. Since the CSC exercise was able to find solutions to some of the local concerns, if institutionalised, it can pave way to a mechanism to redress grievances.

Level of Participation

Given the targeted approach followed in the programme, it was possible to ensure participation of the community and the service providers. In each village, the area of intervention was identified through an 'informal' needs assessment. Given that the local CSO was conducting the exercise, they mentioned identifying the participants from the MGNREGA worksite that seemed to be of importance or had visible problems in quality of implementation.

Upon the completion of awareness activities in the villages, the meetings were organised on the worksite or after work hours in order for the workers to attend. Mostly, the participation in the each exercise was in the range of 18 to 52 workers. The challenge, however, was to engage

the participants in the scorecard exercise. Data reveals that some communities were hesitant to actively express their concern because of the inherent power structure that embodies the cultural dynamics. *Sarpanch*, the head of the *panchayat*, is the most powerful political leader at the village level, also, traditionally, the most wealthy/influential in the area. During these meetings, the lack of anonymity made such open discussion to be perceived as more threatening to the workers as they were unsure of the repercussions.

Ensuring participation from the service providers also required concerted efforts. Given that MGNREGA already has social audit as an accountability mechanism built into the system, the service providers had to be continuously sensitised to directly engage with the community. *Panchayats* with proactive service providers did not hesitate to take part in the scorecard exercise. One *Sarpanch* from Tonk district near Jaipur noted that the interface meetings helped him to clarify his difficulties in delivering services to the community. The process helped in bringing transparency - not just for the community but also for the service providers - in delivery of services.

However, overall, it was a struggle to convince the service providers to participate. In case support of the *panchayat* could not be gathered, CSC exercise was moved to other location.

Outcomes

The project started out with a defined goal of creating a network of organisations and individuals to promote a culture of good governance and accountability. The definite objective of training 33 CSOs to conduct 66 community scorecards with the intention of gathering insights on the performance of MGNREGA in different geographical areas was successfully completed. The data was also planned to be utilised for promoting CSC among the government stakeholders. Towards the end of the project, in March 2012, the objectives proposed were fulfilled through the activities carried out by the CARTS team. A total of 13 master trainers and 66 facilitators were trained in the use of Community Scorecards. All of trained CSO representatives conducted CSC

exercises in all 33 districts of Rajasthan in order to improve service delivery.

Creating a network of CSO

The primary outcome of this project is the creation of a trained network of individuals in each district of Rajasthan capable of conducting the scorecard exercise, engaging with the community and sensitising *panchayats*. Social audit as an accountability tool has been promoted within India through governmental initiatives such as MGNREGA and *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (also referred to as SSA, is a federal government-initiated campaign for total literacy in the country), but awareness and usage of other accountability tools including scorecards, budget tracking and report cards are still at a nascent stage. By creating a network of individuals, CART has promoted the concept of social accountability and ensured availability of capacitated organisations to advance social accountability.

Generating Awareness

Through the preparatory ground work for the CSC exercise, the community was made aware of the provisions of MGNREGA. The workers were informed about the specific entitlements such as unemployment benefits and worksite facilities. Earlier, the information about MGNREGA was made available through *panchayats*; however, the officials had significant control over the choice of information to be released. With the input tracking mechanism, the entitlements of workers, information on budget allocated and actual expenditure were made available. This helped empower workers to demand their rights and judge the service providers.

Promoting citizen-government engagement

Interface meetings have deepened interaction between the citizens and service providers. In a closed governance structure where people did not feel comfortable interacting with service providers, such meetings helped them collectively express their concerns and develop an action plan for the community. Interactions with the beneficiaries suggest that as compared to earlier times when the service providers (*panchayats*) were approached individually, it was much more difficult for them to evade

questions in a meeting situation. Further, the community believed that the relationship between the community and service providers has increased.

Resolving immediate MGNREGA concerns

Through the CSC project, the communities were able to voice their concerns in the presence of government representatives/officials, and discuss possible solutions. An analysis of 32 CSCs indicates that the process was beneficial as MGNREGA implementation issues surfaced for the first time openly. The communities were able to specify their grievances regarding wages, work-site facilities and non-availability of jobs - all of which are their rights under the programme.

Through creation of action plan, there was an acknowledgement by the government that issues will be resolved within a time-frame.

Key Challenges & Mitigation Measures

The challenges in the project were observed at two levels: first, the implementation strategy of CART, and second, in the CSC exercise carried out by the trained CSOs.

Attrition rate of trainers

Identifying appropriate CSOs to create the governance network in Rajasthan was a challenge because of the quality required to efficiently put the model into operation. Upon identification of local organisations, the training was organised for their representatives. However, during the course of the project, these representatives left their respective organisations without substitutes to take the project forward. To overcome this, CART scheduled refresher course for new people joining the team.

Lack of interest

At the community level, the challenge in implementation was to generate interest among citizens and service providers to participate in this process. Citizens rarely participate in the governance process directly - election being an exception. They are used to corrupt and unaccountable local leaders and are afraid to voice their dissent because of the skewed power structure that exists in villages. Therefore, the CSOs had to speak to the community to inform them about the CSC process, its importance and value in bringing visible benefits to them.

Similarly, service providers were not interested in participating in the community scorecard process because they were unsure about the intention of the exercise. The project was not mandated by the government; instead, it was promoted by non-state actors, and had participation of the citizens directly.

Sustainability

As per the project design, the CSC exercise was supposed to be carried out only once in each panchayat. While the project was successful in achieving its objectives, it seems the long-term sustainability of social accountability is in question.. At the end of the project, very few panchayats decided to organise repeat interface meetings. Conducting CSC exercise under the project was possible because of the active involvement of CSO but the intention of developing a culture of good governance would require the community to take its own initiative. However, limited interest shown by the service providers and the community in some cases makes the sustainability of the project doubtful.

Lessons Learned

Importance of network for large-scale implementation

The CSC exercises are usually limited to the district-level and rarely scaled-up geographically to cover the entire state. The CUTS approach provides an innovative way to execute large-scale implementation while building local capacities. The idea of leveraging its own network in Rajasthan showed visible results as a majority of the CSOs were able to conduct the CSC exercise in their respective panchayats. In addition, there was inherent trust between CUTS and CSOs as well as the CSO and the community, which fostered the outreach and execution of the social accountability tools.

For the future, CUTS should explore the possibility of conducting CSCs more than once.

While the model was successful in gathering the MGNREGA data across the state, repeated attempts at CSC would enable to assess the possibility of developing a culture of social accountability and keeping the interest of community to engage in governance process.

Collective bargaining for improving service delivery

During the focus group discussion, it was revealed that the community benefitted from the collective action encouraged during interface meeting. Earlier, when the *panchayat* officials were approached individually, it was easier to give an excuse for non-performance. In the discussion with community, the service providers were compelled to answer the community. The community members also felt that approaching the service providers in a group is a more suitable option for redressing their grievances.

While the CSC exercise has different individual components to address the demand side of governance, some elements such as collective action can be encouraged among aware citizens to inform service providers about specific concerns.

Empowering communities

By disseminating information on MGNREGA, the CSOs were able to inform the beneficiaries about their rights and entitlement. Although Rajasthan has been in the centre of MGNREGA implementation, most of the communities are still unaware of the provisions of the act. In such a scenario, the outreach efforts by the local CSOs helped citizens become aware of their rights. Otherwise, the communities are solely dependent on government officials to provide them details on the prevailing schemes.

Potential for Scale-Up

Typically, community scorecards are introduced in a limited geographic area such as village or a panchayat. However, CART took the risk of large-scale intervention to strengthen their advocacy effort for institutionalisation of community scorecards. The project has shown visible results by conducting CSC exercises in all

33 districts of the state and using the data to support their claim with the state government.

Success of the project lies in the implementation strategy that ensured fulfilling the pre-conditions of social accountability intervention. Care was taken to make sure that the CSOs had the technical capacity, relationship with the community and the ability to interact with service providers. CART also ensures that they were present at all interface meetings to supervise the quality and hence effectiveness of the discussions.

Given CART's implementation model, its impact should be deepened to include more *panchayats* and more interface meetings. CART has already conducted CSC exercise in villages and brought out the impediments to achieving development effectiveness. Although the action-plan developed during the exercise serves as a promise for a better future, the actual benefit would be realised only when the service providers are able to deliver. This would require continuous checks from the community. The CSOs involved in the project would probably promote such interactions; however, given the financial costs associated with active engagements, the motivation may be limited. Therefore, if multiple CSC exercises are a part of the implementation model, there is a greater chance of developing a culture within the community.

The bigger challenge to promoting social accountability is participation of people and breaking the cultural barrier that stands against questioning authority. In two years of implementing the project, most of the time was spent on preparatory work such as capacity-building and awareness campaigns. CSOs involvement was critical to bring stakeholders together to make the model function well. Having invested in the basic activities, it would be useful to facilitate periodic CSC exercises till the community feels empowered to take the initiative by itself.

ANNEX

Annex 1: About The Implementing Organisation

CUTS Centre for Consumer Action, Research & Training (CUTS-CART) was established in the year 1996. Currently, they are working consistently on seven programmatic areas through consumer perspective. They possess in-depth knowledge and resources in the field of consumer protection and education, investor protection and utility reforms. Continuous pioneering work in Rajasthan in the area of consumer protection found CUTS CART at the forefront of the consumer movement in India and beyond. So far, the Centre has trained over 1200 activists and created 300 independent groups in Rajasthan and elsewhere. Moreover, CUTS CART has about 1000 organisations in its network.

Annex 2: Interview Questionnaire

Background

1. CUTS-CART has implemented the CSC project with the aim of developing a culture of good governance and accountability in Rajasthan through involving CSOs. What was the reason for choosing NREGS as prime focus for this project?

   a. How is the overall implementation of the NREGS in the state?

2. CART, ANSA-SAR, 14 master trainers and 66 CSOs are the key stakeholders in the project. Can you explain the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder?

   a. Are there any other stakeholders in the project? If yes, please elaborate on their roles and responsibilities.

3. Usually, CSC projects are undertaken in a small geographical spread but in this case, the project is spread across the State. What was the motivation behind introducing CSC in all 33 districts?

Social Accountability Tool

4. Considering that Social Audit is already mandatory for NREGS, do you believe including another social accountability tool is beneficial? If yes, how?

Implementation Strategy

5. In our experience, most of the social accountability tools are applied at village, panchayat or maximum, district level, and intervention is directly with the community. In this project, a network is being created with the help of other CSOs. Can you elaborate on the implementation strategy adopted by CUTS?

6. The project aimed at building capacities of 14 master trainers and 66 CSC facilitators. Why did CART choose to have two separate level of intervention?

7. CART conducted a capacity gap analysis to identify the appropriate CSOs to be trained as CSC facilitators. Please explain the gap analysis process?

   a. What selection criteria were used to identify 66 CSOs out of a list of 1000?

   b. Did CUTS limit the CSOs to its network of organisations?

8. Were the training materials developed by CUTS? If no, then who developed the materials?

9. How many CSOs were trained in each district? What strategies were adopted to reduce duplication of efforts?

10. CUTS organised three types of training. One at the state level, 4 divisional level and then a refresher course. What was the reason for having different levels of training?

11. Can you explain how the CSOs organized CSC in villages/*panchayat*? How was the community brought together?

    c. Were there any awareness campaigns held in villages to spread awareness among people?

12. Given the large-scale implementation, what monitoring mechanisms were adopted for quality control?

13. One of the objectives of the project is to advocate for Social Accountability in the state. How does CART envision to regularly advocate among the government officials and community.

Participation Level

14. Given the literacy levels, and economically disadvantaged communities, were there challenges in motivating people to participate in meetings.

15. Although general response of the community seems good, socio-cultural factors do seem to affect the overall implementation of the process. How do you plan to overcome this situation?

16. How did the government respond to the situation? Were they supportive of the project? If yes, how? If no, why not?

    d. Typically, once the local government officials extend their support for the project, it becomes easier to implement CSC. Is this the case with this project as well?

Outcomes

17. There have been 66 CSC conducted across the state. What have been the immediate outcomes of the project in terms of NREGS implementation?

    e. Has the workers situation improved after the interface meetings?

    f. Did the government deliver/take the action as discussed in the meetings?

18. Who is in charge of following up with the government to ensure that the discussions during interface meetings are acted upon?

Challenges

19. Were there any challenges in the implementation of the programme? If yes, what were the challenges? How did you overcome them?

Scale-Up

20. Presently, the project is implemented in two *panchayats* of each district. Are there plans to include more panchayats? If yes, please elaborate on the plans. If no, then why not?

CASE STUDY 5

People's Initiative For Accountability
And Transparency In Health And Education

Introduction

A variety of economic crises has undercut the fundamental premises of liberalisation and growth focused development strategies. Slow reduction in poverty, fluctuating employment scenario, low agricultural growth, widening urban-rural divide, and the prevalence of regional, gender and social disparities have underlined the need for continued social protection in India. However, most welfare schemes are plagued by issues of low and uneven coverage, leakages, corruption, inefficient targeting, and administrative laxity[1]. The growing importance of social protection in India is reflected in the Government of India's Common Minimum Program and the Eleventh Five-Year Plan that committed to institutionalisation of these programmes as legal rights, and proposals to include the unorganised

Intervention	Community Scorecards
Location	Dewas and Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh
Organisation	Jan Sahas Social Development Society
Sector	Rural health and primary education
Target Audience	Rural households; children aged 6- 14 years
Geographic Scope	Sonka tch and Bagli blocks in Dewas, and Tarana block in Ujjain

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[1] World Bank. Social Protection for a Changing India. 2011

sector within new types of social protection interventions.[2] An increase in resources and political priority for the same were at the heart of the Eleventh Five-Year Plan's commitment to a more inclusive growth model.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (also referred to as SSA, is a federal government-initiated campaign for total literacy in the country) and National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) are two flagship government programmes aimed at changing the face of elementary education and rural health in the country. But these schemes have had varied impact both across and within states. Madhya Pradesh (MP) has among the highest concentrations of dalit population in the country, a large proportion of whom live in Ujjain and Dewas districts (traditionally, considered untouchables, dalits belong to the lowest strata in the Hindu caste system). The inefficient implementation of SSA and NRHM has yielded limited benefits and even these are unevenly distributed owing to rampant caste discrimination.

The Jan Sahas Development Society launched the People's Initiative for Accountability and Transparency in Health and Education in 2010 to uplift the status of health and education in these two districts by using social accountability tools, encouraging participation and building capacity. Among the objectives of the project are to create a monitoring framework for public welfare schemes and make communities aware of social accountability issues, civic watch, and Right to Information. It also aims to help people utilise social accountability tools. For this, it employs a four-pronged strategy aimed at mobilisation and awareness generation, enlisting community participation, capacity building and institutional strengthening and advocacy efforts with government as well as civil society.

Social accountability tools like community scorecard, social audit, budget tracking, public hearings and RTI are being utilised in the project to ensure transparency and accountability from government in SSA and NRHM implementation. As of March 2012, 16 community scorecard exercises, one social audit, 12 budget tracking exercises and two interface meetings have been organized under the project. Various training

modules have been developed and workshops organised for capacity building of government officials at district, block and *Panchayat* levels. (A *Panchayat* is the term for locally elected, village self-governance councils, whose administrative jurisdiction is congruous to the geography of village or villages they represent. *Panchayats* are recognised as the third tier of government by law in India.) In addition, two information and resource centers have been established at the district level for information dissemination about the schemes and facilitation of interactions between community and government.

Context

The National Rural Health Mission and the *Sarva Shiksha* Abhiyan are landmark government provisions aimed at securing health and education services for rural populations in the country. Launched in 2005, the NRHM aims to improve access to primary health care services, encourage community ownership, strengthen public health systems, enhance equity and accountability, and promote decentralised delivery of services. In order to universalise elementary education across India, the SSA was launched in 2001 to integrate all children aged between 6-14 years into the formal education system. This entails establishment of new schools in marginalised areas, strengthening infrastructure and the capacity of teachers in existing schools, providing training in life skills, improving the existing education service delivery systems and making education inclusive.

NRHM and SSA rely on mobilising communities for decentralised implementation of schemes. This requires inclusion of communities and people from all social and economic strata. However, the performance of the schemes has not been inclusive in most states. In Madhya Pradesh, over 15 per cent of the population belongs to the dalit community, which, in Madhya Pradesh, is a patchwork of 47 castes and 75 per cent of them live in rural areas[3]. The literacy level among them is 58.60 percent while among the dalit women it is 43.30 per cent. Instances of discrimination and atrocities against them are common. Consequently, even the benefits of government schemes related to

[2]. Ibid
[3]. Jan Sahas and UNICEF. Exclusion and Inclusion of Dalit Community in Education and Health: A Study. 2009

Demographic category	Dewas	Ujjain	Madhya Pradesh
Total population	1,308,223	1,710,982	60,348,023
Male	677,866	882,871	31,443,652
Female	630357	828,111	28904371
Rural population	949,876	1,048,195	4,438,111
Urban population	358,347	662,787	1,596,712
Population growth rate (in %)	26.39	23.63	24.3
Sex ratio (no. of women per 1000 men)	930	938	920
Literacy rate (in %)	60.94	70.86	64.11
Male	75.74	83.05	76.8
Female	45.03	57.87	50.28
Dalit population (as % of total population)	18.26	24.72	15.2

Table 1: Profile of areas covered under the Jan Sahas project

Source: Census of India 2001

health, education and other basic services are distributed disproportionately across different sections of the population, working to the detriment of the *dalits*. This translates into reduction in their chances of a better social and economic life. Within Madhya Pradesh, Dewas and Ujjain districts have a high concentration of *dalit* population. In the absence of a sound monitoring system, the implementation of health and education services at the village level is poor, marked by uneven distribution of benefits among different strata of the population. Studies[4] have revealed shortcomings everywhere: implementation, monitoring, transparency and overall participation of citizens.

Fifty four per cent *dalit* children are deprived of *anganwadi* center facilities, mostly because of their caste. (*Anganwadi* or *Anganwadi* Centers are village crèches. Though mainly for the children farm laburers, *Anganwadis* assume primacy as delivery points for all government-led, village-level mother-and-child interventions.) The discrimination is shocking at times with the children often being asked to

bring their own plates for food at school, eat outside the anganwadi facility and clean the plates of non-*dalit* children. As for health facilities, visits by the Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (or AMNs who are the last in the chain of care providers in the rural health system) to *dalit* habitations are irregular forcing pregnant women to walk to the anganwadi centre for health check-ups. In addition, vaccinations are not available on time and pregnant women and patients from the *dalit* community are shunned. Against this background, the Jan Sahas Development Society or Jan Sahas launched a project titled People's Initiative for Accountability and Transparency in Health and Education in 2010 in the Sonkutch and Bagli blocks of the Dewas district and the Tarana block of the Ujjain district, covering approximately 90 villages in 30 *gram panchayats*, most of them inhabited by *dalit* community members. Realising that discrimination thrives on account of ignorance among the *dalits* about their rights and entitlements, Jan Sahas primarily aims at (a) increasing community participation and involvement in implementation and monitoring

[4] Jan Sahas and UNICEF. Exclusion and Inclusion of Dalit Community in Education and Health: A Study. 2009

of SSA and NRHM (b) building capacities of service providers and (c) advocating the use of social accountability tools in implementation and monitoring of these schemes at a policy level.

Social Accountability Process

Inefficiencies and corruption in delivery of basic public services to people arise not only due to flaws in implementation strategies but due to uneven commitment by the public sector to encouraging transparency, inclusive decision making and citizen engagement. At the same time, the civil society and citizens may not be able or want to support social accountability initiatives owing to reasons like absence of a culture of civic engagement or lack of faith in the public sector. Jan Sahas uses a variety of social accountability tools to garner community support for more inclusive and transparent governance.
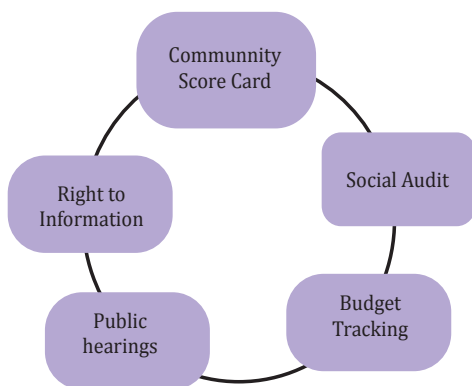
Figure 1: Social accountability tools utilised in the project by Jan Sahas

Since the NRHM and SSA use a uniform decentralised mode of implementation at all levels across the country, the centrally sponsored health and education schemes had to be monitored at all levels of administration.
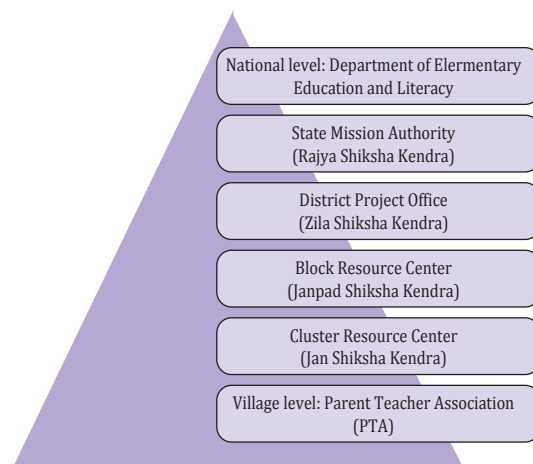
Figure 2: Institutional set up for the implementation of *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*
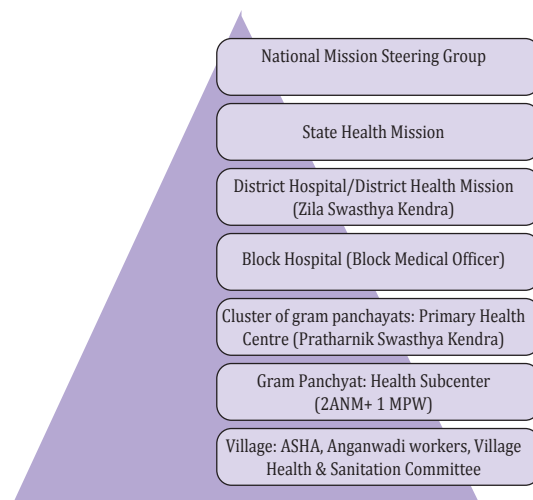
Figure 3: Institutional set up for the implementation of National Rural Health Mission

Implementation Strategy

Jan Sahas follows a four-pronged implementation strategy in Dewas and Ujjain. Instead of finding faults with the service providers for all the deficiencies, the strategy starts by accepting that government officials themselves are not adequately equipped for implementing social protection schemes. At the same time, there is no pressure on them to acquire these skills since the community does not have the capacity to demand its entitlements from the government. Therefore, intervention was required simultaneously in building

awareness among villagers about what is due to them and developing knowledge as well as capacity of government at the village, panchayat, block and district levels. Once people become aware of their entitlements, it is necessary to involve them in monitoring the work with social accountability tools like community scorecard, social audit, and budget tracking. They provide government officials a chance to present their concerns and gain legitimacy by addressing the beneficiaries' concerns.

Community Awareness and Mobilisation
- Campaigns for awareness- rallies, *nukkad natak*, puppet shows etc.
- Two District Resource Centre

Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening
- Training of PRI members, district and block level health and education committee members, PTA members Village Health and Hygiene Committee

Accounlability and Transparency in Health and Education

Community Participation
- Social audit exercises
- Budget tracking exercises
- Community score card exercises
- Campaign activities in 50 villages

Advocacy
- District level sharing workshops
- Networking activities
- Dissemination of awareness modules
- District level Information Resource Centres

Figure 4: The project operates on a four-pronged strategy that has been contextualised to suit the specificities of the communities involved

Before introducing social accountability tools, a three-day training workshop was conducted in Poloy village to educate the project staff on provisions of NRHM and SSA, scope of social accountability and the appropriate use of social accountability tools in the project area. Also, orientation programmes were held at all gram *panchayats* to enlighten community members about scheme provisions and the scope and need for social accountability tools, which are inherently participatory in nature. For instance, a community scorecard exercise requires adequate information to be provided to citizens for them to score services appropriately.

Understanding that the support of government officials related to NRHM and SSA was crucial for the success of the project, Jan Sahas approached them at the village, panchayat, block, district and state levels to explain the objective of the project and the nature of interventions planned. Initial resistance was overcome by explaining that the project's aim was merely to assist the government to identify weaknesses in

implementation and to connect officials with community members. Villages that were performing extremely well were feted at the community meetings. Further, the problems of government officials on ground were communicated to higher levels of administration. Proposals for training officials to enhance their capacity under NRHM and SSA were mooted.

Jan Sahas has used four social accountability tools in different villages, covering nearly 90 villages with at least one of them. Village health sub-centers are established at the cluster level, covering approximately 20 villages. Therefore, one community scorecard exercise in a health sub-center covers 20 village community members. As for elementary education, most villages have a primary school and the decision of which schools are to be included in the community scorecard or budget tracking exercise is based on their performance. The cultural and socio-economic homogeneity of Dewas and Ujjain makes it easy for Jan Sahas to extrapolate the findings from implementation of social accountability tools in some villages to all three blocks.

Appropriateness of social accountability tools utilised

Jan Sahas has worked extensively with the community to make them aware of their rights and the incorrectness of the treatment meted out to them by the government. Since all three blocks are dominated demographically by dalits, it was recognised that all community members would probably not come together in a common space and, therefore, the tools were customised for each situation. For instance, the community scorecard exercise was conducted separately for four different groups - *dalit* men, *dalit* women, non-*dalit* men and non-*dalit* women. This helped in arriving at a clear understanding of the concerns of women and men belonging to different communities. Community scorecards, in comparison to other social accountability tools, are more action oriented and work well in smaller communities.

The participation of community members in the community scorecard exercises and in meetings held for sharing the findings of social audit and budget tracking indicate that these tools have gained some acceptance.

Outcomes/Impact

To understand the project design and overall implementation strategy, researchers interacted with the Jan Sahas team at Dewas. Similarly, to understand the level of community participation and the impact of social accountability tools and of the project at the grassroots level, the research team visited Arania and Nanadharakhedi villages in the Sonkutch block. A focus group discussion (FGD) was held at each of the two villages featuring community members present as well as former government officials at the three blocks. All participants belonged to the dalit and Other Backward Class (OBC) communities, working primarily as agricultural and casual labourers. This was particularly significant since the project targets these communities. Within the groups, participants were divided into those working or having worked for the government and the community members who were mainly beneficiaries of the schemes. However, a great deal of the concerns were common between both groups since most government officials belonged to the same context as the other community members and had, therefore, similar experiences when they were not in political office. Further, due to the patriarchal social structure, discussions were held with women and men in separate groups.

Name of the village	No. of participants	
	Female	Male
Arania	25	11
Nanadharakhedi	8	46
Total	33	57

Table 2: Basic details of composition of focus groups

Participants were asked questions on the status of education and health services in their blocks before the project was launched. The queries centered around their participation in meetings and activities organised by Jan Sahas, their assessment of these initiatives and understanding of social accountability tools and their perception of the level of awareness about SSA and NRHM, community participation and accountability and transparency in government operations. Health and education committee members and other members attached to

Panchayati Raj Institutions (or PRI, related to the governance of *Panchayats*) were asked about their exact role in the project, participation in capacity building initiatives by Jan Sahas and their opinions on the impact.

Impact on the community

Improvement in service delivery

In Dewas and Ujjain the main challenges pertaining to education services before the initiation of the project was inadequate infrastructure (class rooms, separate toilets for boys and girls, drinking water facility), shortage of qualified teachers, and low awareness about SSA provisions. In Nanadharakhedi, a single tutor was teaching nearly 100 students of different classes as well as shouldering administrative responsibilities. During the community scorecard exercise these villagers were able to air such grievances. As a result, the primary school in Nanadharakhedi has now employed four teachers with requisite qualifications. The enrolment of students has gone up in step with the improvement in the service. The teacher at Sadba opened the school for only two hours a day and would be absent from school without notice. *Panchayat* officials reported this to the Sub District Magistrate (SDM, a senior bureaucrat in the district administration) and the teacher was replaced.

Similarly, health services related challenges faced by the community included lack of adequate infrastructure (health centre buildings, adequate number of medicines and vaccinations) and dearth of adequate human resources (insufficient number of Auxiliary Nurse Midwife, *anganwadi* workers, male health workers). Further, the awareness among community members about the provisions of NRHM was abysmally low. To address this *anganwadi* workers wrote out the provisions on the walls of houses and the health centre in village Phawda and campaigned door to door about the days allocated for vaccinations. Today, villagers in Phawda get regular medicines and vaccinations and are able to act if these are not provided in time.

Informed Citizenry

Interactions with community members show that people now understand that education and good health have the potential of steadily reducing poverty. Demand for services has, therefore, risen significantly as reflected in the large turnout at community scorecard events, public hearings and sharing workshops.

Equally community members are now aware that each one of them is constitutionally entitled to the benefits, regardless of caste. Though such awareness has not immediately led to a will or capacity to confront members of higher caste, such a change is bound to happen bringing about in its wake, changes in the social structure.

A vast majority of participants said that they understood their rights and entitlements under SSA and NRHM better and their participation in planning and implementation had improved. They also felt that the government functioning has become more transparent and accountable.

Impact on the Government

The Jan Sahas project recognises that inconsistent service delivery is largely due to lack of awareness and capacity among government officials at different administrative levels. Discussions with implementers suggested that while district and block officers have a fair understanding of SSA and NRHM, those at the panchayat level were largely ignorant of the provisions and procedures under the two schemes. Extensive training was, therefore, provided to Village Health and Sanitation Committee and Parent Teacher Association members. Government officials reported that their understanding of the scheme provisions had benefited greatly from these training programs and suggested that since community members were now more aware of their entitlements they too had become more proactive and efficient in their work. Direct meetings with the community have brought recognition to deserving officers and exposed the laggards. As a result, *panchayat* officials and other village-level committee members reported feeling more confident in discharging their duties.

Impact on the interaction between government and community

Often, lack of engagement between service providers and recipients is a cause for inefficient implementation of many schemes and programs as it tends to open a wide communication gap. This hinders contextualisation of solutions and reduces awareness among people on how to get their grievances addressed resulting in immense waste of financial and human resources.

A core objective of the project, therefore, has been to maximise opportunities for such interactions between officials and community members. Since social accountability tools are ideal for this as they necessitate the presence of both sides and enjoy sufficient credibility, they have been extensively utilised. As of February 2012, 16 community scorecard exercises, four budget-tracking exercises and eight social audits of health and education facilities have been conducted.

Level of Participation

FGDs revealed that over 90 per cent of participants had taken part in awareness campaigns, rallies and *nukkad nataks* (street theatre) for spreading awareness about NRHM and SSA. Under NRHM, there is major emphasis on health care of women particularly those who are pregnant and lactating, and children. SSA covers all 6-to-14-year-old children. Since women are mainly responsible for childcare, they have come out in greater numbers. As of February 2012, 16 community scorecard exercises have been conducted in eight *gram panchayats* - 12 exercises in four health sub centers and four exercises in four primary schools to gather feedback on citizens' satisfaction with public service delivery under SSA and NRHM. The exercises were attended by 955 villagers, nearly 60 percent of them being women.

Location	No. of villages	No. of participants		
		Fem	Male	Total
Health subcenter, Arania	3	104	76	180
Health subcenter, Badiamandu	3	83	48	131
Health subcenter, Dubli	3	71	47	118
Health subcenter, Kathbadora	3	86	40	126
Primary school Dharakhedi	1	65	50	115
Primary school Mawarkhedi	1	49	38	87
Primary school Sadba	1	63	44	107
Primary school Bordamanda	1	50	41	91
Total	16	571	384	955

Table 3: Jan Sahas has organised 16 community score card exercises thus far. These have enlisted large scale participation from community members.

Name of training programme	Number of participants		
	Female	Male	Total
Parent Teacher Association	10	52	62
Training of *panchayat* officials on education	36	54	90
Training of Block *Shiksha Samiti*	21	28	49
Training of District *Shiksha Samiti*	24	23	47
Village Health and Sanitation Committee	36	63	99
Training of *panchayat* officials on health	12	43	55
Training of Block *Swasthya Samiti*	19	26	45
Training of District *Swasthya Samiti*	20	28	48
Total	178	317	495

Table 4: Participation of community members and government officials in the training programmes organised by Jan Sahas has been substantial.

The participation of community in social audits and budget tracking exercises has been limited. This may be attributed to the nature of these tools requiring more in-depth understanding of financial and quality control mechanisms. However, the participation of villagers in sharing workshops and interface meeting has been substantially high.

On the government side, the project was able to sensitize and build capacities of officials, ensuring that social accountability processes progress in a sustained manner. Six targeted training manuals, three each on health and education, were prepared for this purpose, including training of Parent Teacher Association, Village Health and Hygiene Committee, panchayat officials, and block and district level education and health committees. Thereafter, capacity building workshops were organised for government officials at the village, *panchayat*, block and district levels. These workshops enlisted substantially large participation by administrators, the details of which are in table 4.

A positive impact has been seen on the performance of government officials since people have displayed enhanced awareness of their rights. In many cases, the Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) for every block now visits the villages regularly, does not discriminate against dalit patients, and is more forthcoming in her behavior with villagers. Despite this impact and the high participation of government officials in training programs, the support extended by them to the project remains limited. For instance, it is necessary for the service providers to be present at community scorecard exercises. In some villages, like Arania, the ANM did not attend the exercise, possibly because she was aware that the people were not satisfied with her performance. However, it can be suggested that with better understanding of the way social accountability processes operate, the support of government to the project would improve.

Key Challenges and Mitigation Measures

Any project that addresses large-scale social protection schemes like SSA and NRHM is bound

to run into resistance from the local power structure whose authority it threatens to undermine and from the community itself that is not accustomed to dealing directly with the government.

Weak institutional design

Social accountability requires a system of institutions designed in a manner that makes accountability structurally possible. However, there are various failures within the institutional design of the SSA and NRHM owing to which the programmes have failed to create optimal impact. For instance, the reporting and monitoring systems in both the schemes are inadequate. In the present system, ASHA is accountable to both the *gram panchayat* and the Department of Family Welfare and Women and Child. District level functionaries are also

> **INFLUENCING SUCCESS**
>
> *Two important factors that contribute to the success of the project include a positive approach adopted towards including the government and contextualisation of social accountability tools based on a thorough understanding of the social context of project area.*

accountable to multiple departments at the state level. This reflects a major problem in designing the scheme implementation strategy since a crucial principle of accountability is that there should be minimal lines of accountability to prevent contradictory orders.[5] Further, the recruitment and dismissal of teachers and doctors under the SSA and NRHM is done at the state level, which is vastly removed from the actual context where these professionals are required to operate and where monitoring of their work is to occur.

Weak administrative capacity

In addition to some flaws in the institutional design for implementation of the two schemes, not much emphasis has been laid on the training of government officials at the grassroots level. Unclear understanding of provisions and procedures to be followed under SSA and NRHM often leads to duplicity of work, wastage of

resources, and inefficient delivery of services. It also shakes the confidence of citizens in government since the latter is expected to know what is due to them.

Jan Sahas has understood this debilitating factor in scheme implementation strategy and has been working to shore up the capacity of government officials.

Persisting discrimination on basis of caste

The population in Sonkutch, Bagli and Tarana blocks is deeply divided on caste lines. This has traditionally been responsible for uneven distribution of power equation and discrimination against the lower castes. Though information and benefits of various government schemes have been distributed along these divisions, *dalit* children are discriminated against in schools, portions of mid-day meals are not distributed to them equally and the ANMs do not visit some dalit settlements and often give lower priority to treatment of pregnant women from these communities. Despite an increase in awareness about health and education related entitlements among dalit community members, challenges exist at various levels in their ability to negotiate the power structure in the villages. The situation is even worse for women who are doubly subjugated on account of their caste and gender affinities.

Over time, this has proved to be the most significant factor for the withdrawal of community's support to some project.

Competition from private service providers

Private sector health and education service providers have found a niche in the villages since the government services were largely dysfunctional. With no alternative available, villagers had to approach private schools and clinics for their children and families. With enhancement in the efficiency of health and education service delivery, some private schools have been shut down as people now choose to send their children to government-owned primary schools. However, many such facilities still exist as they are owned by the higher castes that also have more resources at their disposal, thereby making it difficult to close down their operations.

[5.] Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Government of India. Social Accountability Mechanism: A Generic Framework. 2011

Lessons Learned

Context based application of social accountability tools increases their efficacy

Jan Sahas' project has shown that different tools for enhancing social accountability can effectively be used together and can be employed in equally effective ways. However, one of the major reasons these tools fail to create an optimal impact is their homogenous application to widely varied contexts. Jan Sahas' project has shown that with adequate contextualisation of social accountability approaches and tools to suit local experiences, they have the potential to garner a high level of support from the community.

Utilisation of tools is based on a thorough understanding of the social context of the project area. Both Dewas and Ujjain districts are heavily populated by *dalit* members. Further, women have traditionally been confined to the household because of the deeply patriarchal social structure. Understanding this social accountability tools were contextualised for the social dynamics. For instance, community scorecard exercises were conducted by dividing the community members in four separate groups.

Community based organisations have potential to bolster government efforts

The presence of Jan Sahas in the community has helped the implementation of schemes in a variety of ways. It has helped rebuild the credibility of the government among citizens, acted as a link between the government and community, and enhanced interaction between the two. Since community based organisations have more regular and deeper contact with the community, villagers can place their trust in them with relative ease.

Support of service providers is essential

The implementation strategy of Jan Sahas involves government officials from the very outset and continues to include concerns about building their capacity throughout. However, this does not necessarily translate into strong support of the government to the project and the objectives it tries to achieve. Therefore, there

have been various instances of *panchayat* officials, school head masters, teachers, ANMs and doctors not being present for conducting community scorecard, social audit and budget tracking exercises.

Failures in institutional design undermine the demand aspect of social accountability

Social accountability in public service delivery is a result of two processes working in conjunction. First, a system of institutions designed in a manner that makes accountability structurally possible and an informed and mobilised citizenry that can draw upon platforms for engagement to make accountability demands on the system.[6] Various lacunae in the institutional design of SSA and NRHM have limited the extent to which people can demand their entitlements.

Potential for Scale-Up

The project for ensuring accountability and transparency in provision of health and education services has had a positive impact on the community as well as government officials. Use of a wide range of social accountability tools and their effective implementation across villages has been the major strength of the project. There is potential to expand the geographic reach of the project by including other blocks within its coverage area. Uniformity in the social context would greatly assist replication and scaling up of the model in other areas within Ujjain and Dewas. However, the Jan Sahas' approach to implementing social accountability tools is to contextualise them. Effective showcasing of the merits of this approach in enlisting community participation in Dewas and Ujjain suggests that the model can be implemented across contexts.

In the course of the project, it has often come to light that inefficiencies and inconsistencies exist in other social protection schemes of the government like the allotment of funds for building rural houses under the Indira *Awas Yojana* (a federal government programme to provide housing for the rural poor), and disbursement of old age pension under the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension. Jan Sahas' approach to use of social accountability tools can be effectively used for community monitoring of other government schemes as well.

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6. Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, Government of India. Social Accountability Mechanism: A Generic Framework. 2011

ANNEX

Annex 1: About The Implementing Organisation

Jan Sahas Social Development Society was established in the year 2000.Their mission is to empower deprived and vulnerable sections of society, particularly children and women from Dalit and other socially excluded communities like Tribal and Muslims, by protecting human rights, capacity building and mobilisation of communities and promoting overall development. They educate, capacitate and organize concerned stakeholders to empower communities of practice. The organisation had made considerable success in the areas of p bounded labor, human rights, child labour and examining discrimination in schools and Health sub centers'. Jan Sahas Social Development Society worked on People's Initiative for Accountability & Transparency in Health and Education in Dewas, Ujjain and Indore district of Madhya Pradesh.

Annex 2: Interview Questionnaire

Background

1. What was the exact date of commencement of the project?
2. What were the criteria for choosing Dewas and Ujjain as districts for Jan Sahas's intervention to ensure social accountability in provision of health and education services? Which particular blocks in both the districts are you working in?
3. According to our research, Jan Sahas Social Development Society conducted a state level survey in 2008 to assess the reach and inclusiveness of NRHM and SSA towards dalit and other backward communities in the state. What were the primary findings of the survey?
4. What were the existing problems in accountability and transparency on the supply side of services under NRHM and SSA? Answer this under the following heads:

   i. Political accountability (level of corruption)

   ii. Administrative accountability (unclear procurement rules and processes)

   iii. Financial accountability (lack of transparency in budget allocation)
5. The 10 primary stakeholders in the project. What are their exact roles and responsibilities?

   i. Jan Sahas Social Development Society

   ii. *Gram panchayat*

   iii. Block level education committee

   iv. District level education committee

   v. Parent Teacher Associations

   vi. Block level health committee

   vii. District level health committee

   viii. Village health and hygiene committee

   ix. *Garima Shakti Sangathan* and Dalit *Shakti Sangathan*

   x. Community members
6. Are there any other stakeholders in the project? If yes, what are their roles?

Project strategies

Mobilisation and awareness building

7. What was the level of people's participation in health and education service provision in Dewas and Ujjain prior to the implementation of the project? Please provide data on their awareness level regarding their rights and entitlements under NRHM and SSA.
8. What mechanisms were/are adopted by JS to enlist higher participation of community members under these schemes?
9. What has been the impact of these mechanisms on people's awareness and participation?

Capacity building and institutional strengthening

10. As per our research, JS emphasises on building the capacity of the stakeholders involved with the implementation of the project. What form of training is provided to each of the following stakeholders?

    i. PRI members

    ii. Block health and education committee members

    iii. District health and education committee members

    iv. Village health and hygiene committee members

    v. Parent Teacher Association members
11. What has been the impact of such trainings/workshops on each of these stakeholders?
12. Please provide information on the number of training sessions and workshops organised, their exact content, participants' average profile, and resource persons.

Social accountability tools

13. How many social audit exercises have been conducted under the project?

    i. Which villages/blocks were the exercises conducted in?

    ii. What were the most significant findings from the SA exercises?

    iii. How were the findings of the SA utilised?

    iv. What was the community's participation in them?

v. What was the government's participation in the exercises and their response to the findings?

14. How many budget tracking exercises have been organised thus far?

    i. Which villages/blocks were the exercises conducted in?

    ii. What were the most significant findings of the budget tracking exercises?

    iii. How were the findings utilised?

    iv. What was the community's participation in these exercises?

    v. What was the government's participation in the exercises and their response to the findings?

15. According to our research, a community scorecard has been designed under project. When was this done?

    i. How were the indicators identified under NRHM and SSA for the CSC?

    ii. Has any CSC exercise been conducted yet? If yes, please provide details of the findings.

16. How many interface meetings have been organised with the government?

Advocacy

17. What is implied by a sharing workshop?

    i. Which stakeholders is it attended by?

    ii. How many such workshops have been organised till now?

    iii. What have been the most significant outcomes of these workshops?

18. What are the networking activities through which JS advocates at policy level for the inclusion of social accountability tools in implementation and monitoring of NRHM and SSA?

19. How many Information Resource Centres (IRCs) are currently in operation in Dewas and Ujjain?

    i. When were these established?

    ii. Where are they located?

    iii. What are the main functions of the IRC?

20. What are the kinds of training modules that have been developed by JS? Which stakeholders are these meant for? What is their role in advocacy for using social accountability tools?

Monitoring and evaluation

21. How is the project's progress monitored internally?

22. An advisory committee was proposed to be formed for external evaluation of the project. Has this been done? What is the composition of the committee?

Impact

23. What have been the major achievements of the project?

24. In which arenas has the project met with least success? What were the reasons for this?

25. Working in direct interaction with government authorities often poses a hindrance to information procurement from different departments owing to non-cooperation from implementing staff. Was this the case with this project as well? How was this dealt with?

26. What are/have been the other major challenges faced by the project in the planning, implementation and monitoring? What is/was the approach followed for overcoming them?

Focus group discussion questionnaire

Pri Members

District Health Committee

Block Health Committee

Village Health And Hygiene Committee

District Education Committee

Block Education Committee

Village Education Committee

Parent Teacher Association

1. How many gram panchayats are covered under the project People's Initiative for Accountability and Transparency in Health and Education?

   (For block and village committee members: What is the total number of block and village committees involved in the project?)

2. What are your roles and responsibilities under the project?

3. What kind of training was imparted to you for awareness about and use of social accountability tools?

4. Have you participated in any interface meetings with the community members and other stakeholders? If yes, what is your view on such meetings?

5. The programme has been in operation for approximately two years now. What is your opinion regarding awareness about the programme among community members? Do you think there is a need for more awareness generation and training?

    i. If yes, why? How do you think it should be carried out?

    ii. If no, why not?

6. Has the project had any impact on your work as a PRI member?

7. What do you think have been the most significant achievements of the project?

8. As a PRI member, what are the major challenges that you face in efficient implementation and monitoring of the project?

9. Do you have any recommendations for better implementation of the NRHM and SSA in general and the project in particular?

CASE STUDY 6

Increasing Negotiating Capacities
Through Right To Information

Introduction

The Right to Information Act (RTI), enacted by India's Parliament in 2005, aims to foster a culture of openness and transparency by providing citizens access to information held by the executive. It was envisaged that this would help people understand government operations and decisions and hold public authorities accountable for their actions. The RTI has heralded a culture of accountability by enabling transparency.

In light of this, Leadership through Education and Action Foundation (LEAF), in Namakkal district of India's southern state of Tamil Nadu, initiated a capacity-building project to enhance the negotiating power of marginalised populations like the backward communities who live in the state's Koli Hills, Rasipuram and Namakkal blocks.

Intervention	Right to Information
Location	Tamil Nadu
Organisation	Leadership through Education and Action Foundation
Sector	Socio-economic development
Target Audience	Rural households
Geographic Scope	20 villages in Namakkal district

Despite all their struggles, these communities continue to be neglected by the administration. What does not help them is their ignorance of their rights. Therefore, LEAF decided to focus on empowering these people by training them to use the RTI Act as a tool to push the local officers to shape up.

To implement the project LEAF relied upon mass awareness campaigns as baseline surveys confirmed that most people were unaware of the RTI legislation. Through folk songs and street plays, RTI's potential as a tool in negotiating with government was communicated. LEAF identified village leaders to mobilise the community and support them in filing applications. High literacy rates in the region helped the execution; still, participation was limited because livelihood-related activities took precedence.

By the end of the project, LEAF had helped people fill approximately 1500 applications, making them more aware of RTI, its provisions and potential for improving public service delivery. The villagers have seen a change in the government's attitude and are able to resolve pending issues.

Context

Open access to public information allows people to understand government actions and empowers them to hold leaders responsible for poor service delivery.   The RTI Act passed in 2005 gives citizens the right to seek and get information held by the government (unless sharing the information could threaten security). However, achieving its intended purpose hinges upon the government's will to put it into operation. At present, the impact of the law is limited because of demand and supply-side issues concerning availability of and accessibility to information. While government agencies are training officials to streamline documentation and record-keeping, awareness of the Act is uneven.

According to a study on the Right to Information commissioned by the Indian government's Ministry of Personnel and Public Grievances in 2009, only 13 per cent people in rural India knew about the Act as compared to 33 per cent of urban citizens. The gap was even more pronounced between general (27 per cent) and backward communities (14 per cent). These statistics emphasise that for it to be effective, there needs to be a much greater awareness of the Act.

With the goal of building the capacity of vulnerable communities in Namakkal, LEAF initiated a project to enhance the negotiating capacities and skills of rural people by training them on RTI. The objective was to help marginalised communities engage in the governance process by filing RTI applications and demanding accountability from public administrators. The project's purpose was two-fold:
i)   To empower people by informing them about RTI and their rights and entitlement
ii)   To generate response from non-responsive local government.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) with Namakkal and Koli Hills block communities revealed that the *Panchayat* avoided issues concerning the communities. (A *Panchayat* is the term for locally elected, village self-governance councils, whose administrative jurisdiction is congruous to the geography of village or villages they represent. *Panchayats* are recognised as the third tier of government by law in India.) There was neither an avenue to seek redressal nor to provide feedback. The attitude of the government - political leaders and bureaucrats - was lackadaisical particularly towards backward communities.

Therefore, LEAF decided to focus its efforts on empowering such communities in the 20 backward villages. The project covers the blocks of Rasipuram, Namakkal and Kolli Hills. Namakkal was chosen because LEAF had established the Joyful Learning Centre - an after-school tuition programme for children that had gained some level of credibility in the community.

The larger goal of the intervention is to address the issue of corruption by targeting increased levels of transparency and empowering stakeholders to demand their rights and entitlements from government.

Social Accountability Process

Among many social accountability tools, LEAF opted for the Right to Information as in this situation gaining support of service providers was a challenge. The attitude of *panchayat* leaders towards the community was non-responsive; they visited villages only during election campaigns. Information on development schemes was not shared with the local community. In such scenario, the project prioritized on gathering information from the government and forcing it to act upon the problems faced by the community.

Strategy

- Mobilise community through mass campaigns
- Organise village-level awareness meetings
- Provide intensive trainings
- File RTI application
- Advocate at the district/state level for effective governance

The two-phase strategy designed by LEAF seemed ideal for driving a capacity-building project. The first phase was aimed at creating awareness among the communities through campaigns and training and the second phase was to facilitate the stakeholders to use RTI for ensuring transparency in government schemes.

Originally, a participatory approach, embracing members of the *panchayat*, government leaders and self-help group (SHG) members, was considered for effective and sustained impact. However, this approach had to be abandoned as it could not be contextualised for the social, political and economic environment of the region. Since the *panchayat* was disinterested in improving the quality of governance, it saw the project as a threat, which became evident from its response later to the RTI applications filed by the community. LEAF could neither enrol its support for the project nor get it to disclose information sought by RTI applications. Besides, members of self-help groups and other adults stayed away from these training programmes as they took up a great deal of their time.

Baseline Survey

To plan its work with the communities, LEAF conducted a baseline survey of 25 villages - 15 from Namakkal rural, five from Rasipuram and five from Koli Hills - to discover the socio-economic profile of the communities, their awareness of RTI and interest to learn about the Act. The survey indicated that 70 per cent of the intended beneficiaries belonged to the SC community and 17 per cent to ST. Only nine per cent of the respondents had any understanding of RTI. These findings were the basis of LEAF's implementation strategy.

Awareness Campaign

In the first phase, campaigns were organised at district and the village levels. At the district level kiosks were set-up near village bus stops to maximise participation. The idea was to disseminate basic information about the Act, LEAF's project and the training program.

Village level campaigns were scheduled in the evenings between 8 and 9 pm when the daily wage earners would return home. Informal activities such as story-telling and video documentaries in local languages were key aspects of the campaign. It was easier to draw and engage villagers by organising plays as it was perceived as a form of entertainment.

Following this mass campaign organised to mobilise the community, training programmes were organised to provide specific knowledge and develop skills.

Identifying Village Level Leaders

To facilitate the implementation, village leaders were identified. Since the project involved working with children, female leaders were preferred. Education was the key criteria for the selection. Their presence proved crucial for generating the community's interest in the project.

Initially, LEAF wanted to call for applications from people across the villages. However, realising that it would be more beneficial to handpick people with similar experience, it was decided to select the leaders with help from the community.

Training

The village leaders were responsible for creating awareness in the community about the project activities. For this the leaders visited each household explaining the Act, its benefits and the training dates. The door-to-door promo was to maximise participation at the training sessions aimed at improving the capacity of adolescent children, youth and SHGs. Since, children and youth were important for the project's future, greater emphasis was given to them in the training. The children were in the age group of 11-17 years. While the survey revealed that they had actively participated in the trainings, their interest in filing RTI was not evident.

The elaborate training was a day-long activity that provided information on the RTI Act, its benefits, provisions, and process. Group activities were encouraged to brainstorm common problems in the villages, such as road construction, power supply and water management. Then, at the end of the day, LEAF assisted the community to write an RTI application to the concerned officer. In case the community member was illiterate, then LEAF wrote the application on their behalf.

Filing RTI Applications

As part of the training, the participants identified common problems in their villages and were asked to draft an application towards the end of the training. These applications were later sent to the government by LEAF. Most applications were submitted on the training day or soon after as the participants were regularly motivated by the village leaders to file them. The village leaders on an average, filed close to 50 applications on various issues. Older people were urged to file RTI for their pensions from the government.

Level of Participation

Children and youth were the most active participants. However, the overall support from the members of the community was discouraging. A survey conducted with 58 beneficiaries in Namakkal and Koli Hills indicates that the 62 per cent of the beneficiaries

of the project were children aged 10 to 18. Adult representation was only 14 per cent, probably because of the economic context. For the daily wage labourers, going out to work for their livelihood was obviously a higher priority than attending a day-long training session. Similarly, the self-help group members did not participate in the training programmes, preferring work over the project.

A majority of the participants had at least secondary education - high for rural India. Till February 2012, the project had enabled people to file 1500 application. Villages with high level of engagement of leaders reported higher participation.

RTI Application Details			
S.No	Village Name	Name	Total application
1	Kuppampalayam, Nayagar Street.	Keerthi	41
2	Perumapalayam	Naladevi	57
3	Thathampatti	Nithya	94
4	Veeripalayam	Prabha	103
5	Vakurampatti	Amutha	101
6	Melthour	Sudha	33
7	Aniyapuram	Saroja	105
8	MGR Nagar	Kasthuri	1
9	Kudduladampatti	Geetharani	36
10	Sanarpudhur	Megala/ Sudha	5
11	Kalangulam	Manimegalai	81
12	Anna Nagar	Radha	107
13	Valayapatti	Prema	37
14	Sukampatti	Selvi	91
15	Keelparali	Priya	89
16	Payiyakovilur	Malarkodi	111
17	Naydugapulipatti	lakshmi	59
18	Rajalakshmi	Ashkadupalli	63
19	Elamathi	Janaki	71
20	Vadugapatti	Ramya	106
21	Sulavanthi	Manjula	17
22		General	133
		Total	1541

There was no participation from the government. Even though LEAF intended to work with *Panchayati Raj* institutions, they did not garner support from the leaders.

Outcomes/Impact

Increased awareness

The survey revealed that the project had increased the level of RTI awareness in the villages. Out of 58 people surveyed in Koli Hills and Namakkal, 56 had become aware of RTI, mostly through LEAF's campaign or training. Prior to intervention, no information was available on the RTI at the village level. The response of the communities suggests that the government had made no effort to inform them about the new legal provisions.

Those who attended the training sessions were able to articulate the details of the act, including the process of filing appeals. Notably, majority of them knew the steps of filing RTI application and first appeal. They were capable of writing an RTI application and addressing the needs of the community.

Some degree of improvement in service delivery

There was definite improvement in the service delivery. Individuals who filed RTI to know the status of their pending pensions immediately got response from the government, and their pensions were delivered on time. Community issues such as absence of health workers or cleaning of the water tanks were immediately addressed with the help of RTI. The fact that the government has to respond to an RTI application within a stipulated time and can be held accountable for the information provided prompted the responses.

Earlier the community would visit the local government offices and struggle to find someone to speak to about their concerns. Often, the government officials would ignore the request or ask them to come later. With RTI they were able to get quick and concrete responses.

Empowered community members

Although the project could not reach out to many people, the ones who attended the training felt empowered. They can now engage with an unresponsive government to get the information they want. During the survey, when asked whether they would approach the government

or file an RTI in case they have a problem, majority of them said yes to the RTI option. The belief of people in RTI had increased as they saw that it does force the government to respond and improve service delivery.

Key Challenges And Mitigation Measures

Lack of presence within the community

For a project to be successful, it needs to be accepted by the community. Typically, the civil society organisations that have worked in the village are able to gain support of the community based on goodwill. LEAF did not have this advantage of working with the community. They started operations in Namakkal in 2010. Although they had Joyful Learning Centers in some villages, the organisation had not established a rapport with the community yet. This reflected in the low participation level during training. Even during the survey, community members did not connect with the LEAF staff.

Employing village leaders was a strategy to ensure basic trust and credibility required to engage with the community. These leaders were part of the villages they represented, and had developed relationships within the community. This helped in the initial interactions with the community.

Limited participation of adults

The programme envisaged working with children, youth and self-help group members. The idea was to capacitate them for future betterment of the area. However, children below 14 lacked the maturity required to identify the issues. The survey revealed that they filed RTI applications only during the training programmes, and the applications were mostly written by the village leaders employed by LEAF. Even the identification of the key issues happened as part of a group activity. Therefore, the sustainable effectiveness of empowering children on RTI is yet to be seen.

Further, given that the focus was on children, the training programmes did not take into account the employment pattern of the community.

While it was ensured that the awareness campaigns are scheduled at night, the day-long workshops were not suitable for the adults. This restricted their participation.

In villages, where the leaders were proactive about reaching out to the community, the adults were encouraged to file RTI applications. The village leaders facilitated filing of RTI applications for personal grievances such as pensions, scholarships and marriage compensation.

Threat from service providers

The project was operating in a region where government was not responsive to the needs of the community. In the strong power structure, the community did not have any voice in the democratic institutions. Therefore, when the RTI applications were filed the political leaders did not cooperate. Instead, they threatened the members of the community and asked them to not file RTI applications.

The drawback of RTI is that it does not protect the identity of the person filing a RTI application. The individuals who file RTI applications have to provide their name and address to get a response from the government. This makes them vulnerable to identification and threats.

LEAF tried to mitigate this issue by providing their village leaders' addresses to make it difficult to trace the individual.

Lessons Learned

Identifying appropriate accountability tool

Each of the social accountability tools such as community scorecards, budget tracking and social audit require certain pre-conditions to be successful. For community scorecard, it is important that service providers and community discuss the issues to develop an action plan. In case service providers are not willing to participate, the intended outcome of the scorecard process cannot be achieved. Similarly, if government information is not available, it is difficult to assess the performance of service providers for a social audit. Hence, in the case of Namakkal, where the government's interaction

with the community was almost non-existent, the strategy was to use the RTI as a first step towards building a culture of accountability.

By disseminating knowledge on Right to Information, LEAF has spread awareness among the community on means of seeking redress from service providers. The hands-on training helped in identifying community-level problems collectively, and RTI applications were used to hold government accountable. This is a remarkable achievement in a backward area where no efforts were made earlier by the government or civil society.

However, it should also be noted that RTI is only an initial step to promote accountability. The tool's impact can be limited as it only mandates government to provide a written response. There have been occasions when only a mail was sent as a response to the information requested and no action was taken by the government.

Building trust within the community

Initially, LEAF had to put additional efforts to ensure participation of the community. It was difficult to get people to come for the training as they were not willing to forsake their daily wage. It was only after the benefits of filing an RTI became evident that the citizens began to participate.

The experience while researching LEAF's intervention was different from the ones conducted in the area where the NGO had a presence within the community. In cases where the NGO staff is more involved with the people, makes regular visits and has had grassroots experience of more than a decade, the community is supportive of the program and is willing to engage.

LEAF started with the aim of partnering with SHG members, panchayats and adults but only partially succeeded.

Potential for Scale-Up

Considering that the RTI is already an institutionalised tool for furthering social accountability, promoting its usage is valuable. In two years, LEAF's project has shown encouraging results but limited participation. In villages with active participation, the

government is more accountable for their action as the delay in service has reduced in a number of cases. Further, the citizens have benefitted as they are aware of their rights.

However, the number of people interested in participating in the training is limited due to the amount of time required. While the project design emphasised on capacitating communities to file RTI application on their own, this was not the case in reality. Towards the end of the training, LEAF staff and leaders had to write the applications for the participants. Given this scenario, it seems that one-day training is not sufficient to motivate people enough to exercise their right to information. In the given socio-cultural context, people have been hesitant to approach government authority because they give precedence to their livelihood activities over participating in governance process. Interest in training was, therefore, limited. The mass campaign was good to generally inform people but it did not motivate them to voluntarily take a stand.

Therefore, for RTI to function effectively from the demand-side, people should be able to understand its importance and take the initiative to file applications on their own. Only then, would efforts by civil society be successful. This would be a gradual process and would require concerted attempts by civil society organisations. For the time being, organisations can focus upon engaging with community to disseminate knowledge on good governance and accountability and at the same time educate them on their rights and entitlements. This would also help in building relationship with people that would aid acceptance of projects within the community. Eventually, the community would be able to identify issues on their own.

ANNEX

Annex 1: About The Implementing Organisation

Leadership through Education and Action Foundation - LEAF is a nonprofit voluntary Organisation focusing on right's based advocacy and local knowledge to achieve transparency at all levels from the village to the state. They closely work with women institutions, youth associations and children parliaments in villages to achieve social justice for the highly marginalised and vulnerable communities. LEAF Society worked to educate marginalised and vulnerable local communities in negotiating their rights, demands and entitlements from government and fight corruption using the Right to Information Act of India in Namakkal District of Tamilnadu, India.

Annex 2 A: Interview Questionnaire

Background

1. When was the RTI campaign and advocacy work under the ANSA project initiated?
2. LEAF has been involved in RTI advocacy work for a long time. How is the work under ANSA project different from the previous campaign undertaken by the organisation?
3. Apart from LEAF and ANSA, who are the other major stakeholders in the project? What are their roles and responsibilities?

Social Accountability Tool

4. There are several social accountability approaches that can be used to improve governance and reduce corruption. Why did LEAF identify RTI as the best tool for solving governance problems in Namakkal?
5. Considering the low literacy level among the vulnerable sections, do you think RTI is an effective social accountability tool?
   a. How do illiterate people file RTI Applications?

Implementation Strategy

6. The project is implemented in 20 villages of Namakkal district. What were the selection criteria for identifying these villages?
7. There are two stages in LEAF's project: first, increase the level of awareness among people and second, to file RTI applications. What activities/steps did you follow in each level?
   a. How was information disseminated among people?
   b. What kind of training was given to the government officials?
8. There was a baseline survey conducted prior to the project implementation. Can you please share the results of the survey? What percentage of people were aware of the RTI Act?
   a. Have you conducted any other awareness assessment of the project?
9. In the proposal, it is mentioned that "this project shall try to increase the negotiating capacities and skills of rural people through intensive capacity building, trainings and workshops on RTI and they shall also be provided with strong leadership inputs and supports from LEAF Society." What leadership inputs and support were provided to the rural people?
10. As part of the programme, LEAF intends to educate people about the entire process of filing an RTI application. Does it also help people in writing the application? If not, then how do illiterate people write an application?
11. It is mentioned that LEAF's project is linked to institutions and not individuals. How did you identify these institutions?
    a. What is a Child Parliament?
12. What was the reason to train 20 village leaders for the project? How was the response in the villages? How many people applied for the position initially?
13. One of the activities mentioned in the proposal includes, lobbying at the state/district level. Who lobbies with the government/panchayat? Is it LEAF or the Community? How do you lobby?

Participation Level

14. Prior to the implementation of the programme, how often did the community submit an RTI request for MGNREGA, PDS and government procurement process?
15. How has the community responded to this project? How did you motivate people to attend the trainings/workshops?
16. How has the local government/administration responded to this initiative? Have you approached the government/panchayat to promote RTI?

Challenges

17. Considering the large number of SC/ST population and cultural sensitivities associated with it, were there challenges in terms of bringing people together for the workshops/trainings?
18. In the proposal, it was mentioned that the panchayat politics can become an issue in terms of promoting RTI in panchayats. Does the socio-political culture effects other aspects of the programme?

Outcomes

19. Out of 6000 people targeted for the programme, how many of them actively participated in the workshops/ trainings? How many of them filed an RTI application for the intended government projects?

    a. The project was completed in October 2011. Does LEAF still interact with the community to monitor the RTI activities?

20. How there been any improvement in service delivery after implementation of this project? If yes, please share the details.

21. Have you conducted any impact assessment to understand the outcomes of the project? If yes, please provide details. If not, then why not?

Village Leaders

1. As village leader, what is your role in promoting and using RTI in villages?

2. What motivated you to become a village leader?

3. How have people responded to the initiative? What kind of difficulties do you face in convincing people?

4. How has government responded to the RTI applications submitted? Are you satisfied with the response? If yes, why? If no, why not?

5. How many applications have you filed?

6. How do you decide on what RTI Applications to file?

7. Have you ever been threatened by anyone for using RTI?

Annex 2 B: Survey Questions

Name: _____ Village: _____

Gender: Male / Female

1. What is your age?
    a. <10
    b. 10-18
    c. 18 - 25
    d. 26 - 40
    e. 41 - 60
    f. > 60

2. What is your level of education?
    a. Illiterate
    b. Can read and write
    c. Primary education (upto 5th standard)
    d. Secondary education (upto 10th standard)
    e. Senior Secondary (upto 12th)
    f. Graduate

3. Are you aware of the Right to Information Act?
    a. Yes
    b. No

4. If yes, how did you hear about the Right to Information Campaign?
    a. Friends/Family
    b. LEAF Awareness Campaign
    c. LEAF Training
    d. Government/Panchayat
    e. Other _____

5. What did you find most useful in the LEAF training?
    a. How to file RTI
    b. Information on schemes
    c. Individual rights
    d. Other _____

6. Have you filed an RTI application?
    a. Yes
    b. No

7. How many applications have you filed?
    _____

8. How did you file the application?
    a. Own
    b. LEAF village leader
    c. Children
    d. Other _____

9. For what purpose did you file an RTI application?
    _____

10. What is the process of filing an RTI?
    a. Write an application to the Dept/PIO
    b. Apply Court Fee stamp
    c. Wait 30 days for the response
    d. First appeal
    e. Second appeal

11. How has the government responded to the application?
    a. Mailed a response
    b. Visited the village
    c. Rectified the problem
    d. In the process of addressing the problem
12. Has RTI helped you in voicing your concerns effectively?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Can't Say

13. In future, if you have any problems would you go to:
    a. Panchayat
    b. Government
    c. File an RTI application
    d. Approach LEAF

CASE STUDY 7

Enhancing Community-Centered Governance
In Climate Change Affected Coastal Areas

Introduction

In the global battle against climate change, adaptation and mitigation have emerged as frontline tools. But this cannot be held universally true. In third world regions like the Gulf of Mannar (GoM) in Tamil Nadu it is clear that much more than just adaptation and mitigation is needed to reverse the damage caused by poor rule and unsustainable development.

Over the last many years the people of GoM have been finding it increasingly difficult to carry on with their traditional way of life and livelihood due to reasons they cannot even understand: erratic weather patterns, rising sea levels and depleting marine life - all worsened by climate change. Sensing that reversing the fortunes of these poor people - largely fishermen and artisans - would call for a local effort, the

Intervention	Community Score Card
Location	Gulf of Mannar, Tamil Nadu
Organisation	Public Affairs Centre
Sector	Environmental Governance
Target Audience	Fishing communities Palmyra tappers
Geographic Scope	98 coastal villages of the districts of Ramanathapuram and Thoothukodi

Bangalore-based non-profit organisation, Public Affairs Centre (PAC), has designed an initiative that stresses on the empowerment and engagement of communities in the governance of the coastal economy.

The people-centric approach aims to synergise the efforts of government and communities to alleviate the affects of climate change. To ensure responsiveness of the government towards local needs and redressing grievances, PAC seeks to orient policy-making to the concerns of the communities threatened by climate change. Further, it is involved with integrating local adaptation and survival strategies into governance by helping local communities engage with government.

PAC aims to inject a community perspective and enhance the effectiveness and local relevance of environmental governance by using "climate change community scorecard" (CCSC) at the core of its social accountability process. Its model of enhancing local capacity to adapt to climate change can help the benefits of human and environmental preservation efforts to percolate down to the lowest social levels not just in GoM but in other similar regions as well. In this model the local community is both a beneficiary and a key partner, engaged with the government to improve delivery of public service and environmental governance.

Context

The traditional way of life, livelihood patterns and practices of the coastal communities of GoM are being increasingly threatened by climate change. A participatory mapping exercise helped PAC pinpoint both the threats: coastal recession, changing patterns of the sea, rising water levels and soil pollution caused by unregulated industrial growth and unsustainable infrastructure development such as the Setu Canal Project and the East Coast Road.

The existing model of environmental governance in GoM is unable to create opportunities for meaningful engagement with the communities, disseminate knowledge or facilitate mechanisms for effective governance and it is, therefore, largely ineffective. While the government sponsors many welfare and relief

measures for the development of the communities, field studies reveal that rampant corruption and unaccountability prevent them from reaching their intended beneficiaries, intensifying the distrust among the communities for the governance structures.

The palmyrah tappers complain that the local government does not equally distribute material resources (boiling vessels) to facilitate their livelihood activities. Poor management of local needs triggers conflicts between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. The fishing communities say that the government has done little to regulate industries that are responsible for pollution and depletion of marine life in the region, which forces them to transgress maritime borders in search of a good catch and lands them into trouble. They assert that their traditional livelihood activities are imperiled because of the constant harassment by regulatory authorities. The local governance, in the meantime, remains inaccessible and deaf to the concerns of the community.

Since poor communities cannot afford the time and cost involved in making their voices heard in government departments, they are forced to use middlemen. Reform here will depend on the presence of strong political will and active citizenry. PAC, therefore, stresses on enabling the communities to collectively voice demands and hold agents of government accountable.

The Climate Change Community Scorecard (CCSC) is a community-driven tool to enhance accountability and community participation in environmental governance of coastal areas. PAC's thrust on CCSC is in step with its larger goal of building a groundswell of demand for good governance through active citizen-monitoring of public service delivery. The emphasis at GoM is, therefore, on using CCSC for securing governance that is sensitive to the communities and their struggle to sustain their lives and livelihood in the face of climate change. For this, the organisation is enhancing community awareness by facilitating informal discussions and engagement with local governance on climate change, adaption and poverty reduction. PAC believes that such a citizen-centric approach will move the community towards good governance.

Specific project objectives include:

- Developing a database of relevant information to support advocacy for higher-level reform and more responsive environmental governance policy and regulatory system.
- Developing tool(s) to facilitate citizen monitoring of the impact of climate change in their areas and assessing effectiveness of local environmental regulation to generate an objective body of evidence on the impact of climate change on local livelihoods
- Developing mechanisms whereby communities can meaningfully engage with governance structures and sustainably participate in local environmental management

Social Accountability Process

Knowing that weaker communities are most vulnerable to the impact of climate change, PAC evangelises social accountability tools like the CCSC, which result in the recognition of these communities as primary stakeholders and empower them to influence policies that affect their livelihood. Activities related to CCSC facilitate constructive engagement between informed communities and government agencies to find solutions to existing and emerging challenges.

The design of community scorecards factors in the political and socio-economic character of the region so that the knowledge base it creates can in fact be used to support decisions taken both by the government and the community. The poor level of literacy and awareness of local communities, for example, was one such factor. The execution is intended to be simple yet comprehensive leveraging the strengths of key stakeholders - PAC, People's Action for Development (PAD) and the community.

Key Stakeholders

Other than ANSA (Affiliated Network for Social Accountability), which is the funding agency, and the PAC, an important stakeholder was PAD, which was selected primarily as a field-level implementing agency as it had extensive experience of working with the local

communities on livelihood security and access to water, health and education since 2002. With its record of having engaged with as many as 14000 families, PAD garnered the community support and participation required for implementing CCSC[1] . Moreover, PAC had been actively involved with PAD in developing the CCSC. The objective was to harness the latter's expertise and experience in the region to develop a relevant tool.
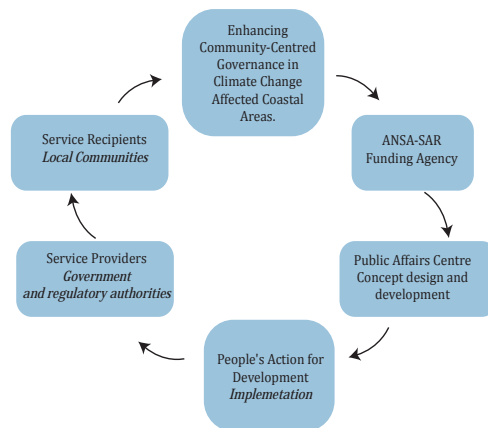
Figure 1 : Key Stakeholders of the social accountability initiative in the Gulf of Mannar

Community Score Card Exercise

Focus

Social security schemes reflect a government's responsiveness and commitment to secure and protect the need of communities, which in the case of villages of the GoM is to adapt to climate change and face its impact. However, ensuring effective implementation of the schemes is a challenge. For example, before PAC's intervention, awareness of relief schemes designed for the palmyra tapping communities was absent. Evidently, efforts to disseminate information on the rights and entitlements of communities were missing or poorly executed. The mechanism for transparent dissemination of information within the governance structure was a deficient one.

Therefore, CCSC was chosen to capacitate the beneficiaries to assess and evaluate the performance of social security schemes. The prioritisation and listing of relevant schemes and its scoring through CCSC made citizens

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1. Information on PAD and its intervention in the Gulf of Mannar can be sourced from http://www.padgom.org/

aware about their entitlements and the government's obligation to fulfill them. The process has also made them aware about the existing practices of governance, its goals and the extent to which it has benefited them. Though the exercises were conducted once in each village, the Participatory Rural Appraisal and CCSC have significantly raised the communities' awareness levels and access to information.

Implementation strategy

Later, a methodical process was followed to gather local information, capacitate stakeholders, and involve them in the score card process.
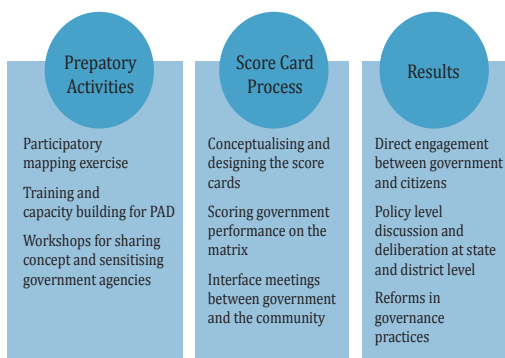
Figure 2: The key components of the CCSC implementation strategy adopted by PAC and PAD.

Baseline Report

Initially, Participatory Rural Appraisal tools were employed in 15 villages falling within three clusters of the district of Ramanathapuram and Thoothukudi. The villages were selected on the basis of a random sample. The findings were used to compile a baseline report on the status of livelihood of the fishing, agricultural and palmyra tapping communities.

Introductory workshop

A district-level workshop was held with different stakeholders including agricultural, forest and horticulture departments, NABARD, non-governmental organisations, researchers and agencies involved in development efforts in the region. The primary objective of the workshop was to orient the stakeholders to the

project's goals and securing their support for achieving them.

Capacity building and training with local partner

The training and capacity-building of its local partner PAD was crucial for this orientation. The facilitators were trained on climate change, CCSC and how PRA tools were to be used to map climate change and its impact. Following the session, the tools were tested in three villages.

Input Tracking

To facilitate the scorecard process, input tracking exercises were conducted to understand the regulations and legislations operating along the coastal and to what extent these impinged upon the livelihood of the villagers. The areas were also assessed by PAD to identify the polluting and non-polluting industries along the coast line. Almost 270 km of the coast line was covered. The assessment involved identifying the activities on the coast and the failure of the governance arrangement to regulate violations.

Designing Climate Change Community Scorecards

CCSC was developed based on mutual consultations between PAC and PAD. The objective of the scorecard was to inform the communities about their rights and entitlements and empower them to engage with the local governance structure by deciding on the key discussions points. The priority areas identified for the purpose were welfare and relief schemes because they indicate the responsiveness of governance towards preserving and promoting the wellbeing of its citizens.
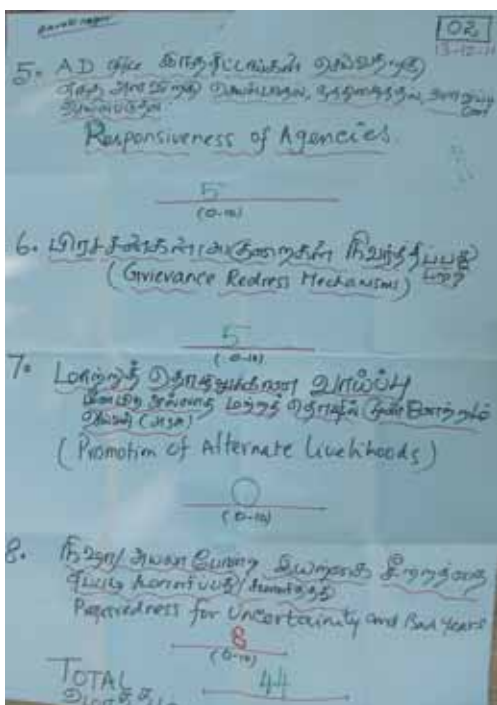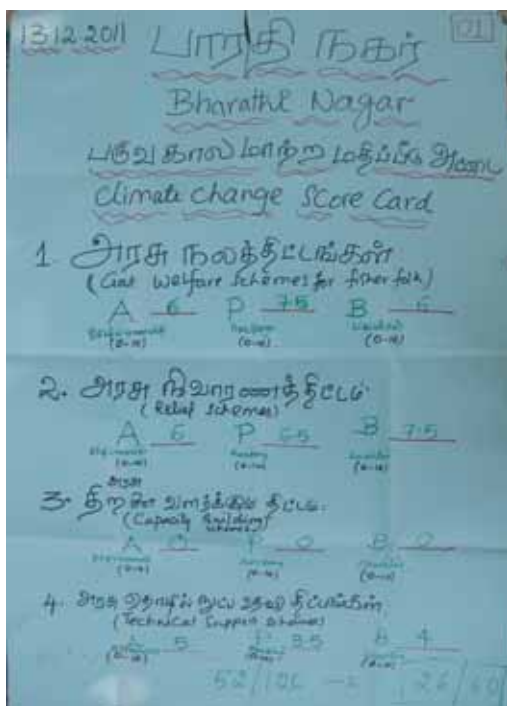
Scoring Exercise

Informal discussions and interactions were adopted as primary sources of information dissemination and to ensure active involvement of the community in the exercise. The purpose of the scoring was not just to rank but to identify the usefulness and the weaknesses of the schemes and advance recommendations. The process involved the following stages;

- Prioritise relevant schemes under welfare, relief, capacity-building and technical support.
- Score the schemes based on three indicators - awareness, process and benefit and rank collectively in focus group discussion on a 0-10 scale.
- With each scoring, deliberate on concerns and consolidate them to create an action plan.
- Based on the inputs from the tracking exercises and CCSC, finalise the action plan. Following the consolidation of the plan, share the information with chosen community representatives.
- Finally, organise an interface meeting between the government and the community to help communities engage with government agencies on the action plan and facilitate a constructive and meaningful dialogue between the communities and the government.

Level of Participation

The CCSC exercises have been organised only once per village. PAD has been able to garner adequate support for its community level activities. Participation levels at these sessions varied across villages. The organisation managed to draw 750 villagers to the PRA activities. Participation was low because the activities clashed with livelihood related work of the villagers. Communities, however, actively participated in the convergence meeting. While the organisation expected a total presence of 40 members, 55 attended the meeting.

Compared to community participation, the involvement of government officials was much lower. Their presence at the district workshop was minimal and a similar trend was witnessed

at the interface meeting. The organisation expected at least 24 officials, but only 15 turned up. Similarly, 18 officials were expected for interface meeting but only 10 attended.

In all, PAD drew close to 425 participants from 17 villages in the CSCEs, which targeted the participation of 25 villagers from each of the villages. The reason for restricting the participants was to ensure that the exercise produces high quality output.

Outcomes

Creation of informed citizenry

Following the CCSC exercise, the communities have become more aware about their rights and knowledgeable about the intricacies of climate change, welfare and relief schemes designed to cater to their specific needs and related entitlements. There is also greater accountability of government towards them. Interactions with the villagers of Kunjaipuram, Andancheri and Bhartinagar revealed that the PAD-led intervention had improved their awareness about their rights and entitlements and the duties of government agents.

Information empowerment has enabled these communities to participate in a process of monitoring and evaluating government's responsiveness through CCSC. Although the communities are unequipped at this stage to independently own the process as a collective effort, the use of the scorecard has facilitated them to influence governance as active citizens.

Constructive engagement with the government

There is an increased engagement with the government institutions on the question of governance, accountability and active citizenship through the interface meeting. Interactions have also been rewarding in terms of their willingness to extend support to the initiative and engage with the communities to arrive at effective solutions.

The interface meeting of April 2012 resulted in a concrete solution to organise a discussion forum once in three months involving members of the local communities and government officials. This forum will act as a platform that facilitates greater transparency between the government and the citizens. The authorities were willing to share and discuss the nature of their work and services with the communities on a regular basis.

Specifically, the Additional Director of the fisheries department was open to actively engaging with the fisher communities to improve governance. A village development committee was recommended for every village to connect the villagers and government authorities. These committees were to be led by members of the civil society, primarily PAD and expected to play a crucial role in communicating the needs and concerns of the communities to concerned authorities. The primary idea behind such institutions is to eliminate middlemen and create an accountable and transparent arrangement of grievance redressal.

Key officials governing the rights and entitlements of palmyra tappers were absent at the meeting. However, local level department officials promised to intensify their engagement with the community and carry their grievances to higher authorities.

Recognition of local voices

CCSC can potentially secure increased representation of local voices in dominant spheres of decision making. The local communities have, for the first time, participated in a process of engagement with the government and its activities. The effectiveness of policy practices and governance mechanisms in the region depends upon their appropriateness in the existing context. The information derived from CCSC can act as a knowledge base for the government to develop relevant practices that respect and recognise local needs and demands.

Key Challenges And Mitigation Measures

Inculcating a sense of commitment for accountability and active citizenship is a challenge. The development of a culture that derived its strength from a responsive government and an informed citizenry was constrained at three important levels.

Traditional bureaucracy

Government officials are accustomed to a work culture driven by traditional bureaucratic arrangements bound by rigid procedures and processes with limited citizen interaction. Getting a commitment from such officials for a culture of accountability led by an informed citizenry is, therefore, an ongoing challenge.

PAC encourages a non-confrontational approach to government. It has prioritised the need to promote positive engagement with the state. The organisation believes that it must adopt a stance of working with the government and not against it. The organisation emphasises on the need to recognise the role and the importance of a strong partnership with the government to deepen and expand the impact of the initiative. CCSC is not just another tool to measure or assess accountability; it is part of a larger process striving to develop a culture of accountability. It aims to extend support to the government and strengthen its efforts to reach out to citizens and improve the existing system of service delivery.

The organisation believes that it can be challenging to involve the government in a process that demands an assessment and evaluation of its performance. Hence, PAC has made a conscious effort to ensure that it identifies and involves those representatives of the state who can distinguish between a process that scrutinizes its performance and a process that collectively improves governance structures. The project is being promoted as one that aims to identify the deficiencies in the existing practices of service delivery and rectify them by adopting solutions that are evolved through constructive dialogue and engagement with the citizens.

Undeveloped community of informed citizens

Though it is known that social participation of local communities is key to the success of the initiative, the realisation of this ideal in the current context is difficult as it involves a community unaware about even its basic rights. Moreover, the realisation of being a collective entity or an organisation, a pre-condition for community engagement, is weak or non-existent. To enhance social participation, the initiative wants to create a community of informed and empowered citizenry through the CCSC. The implementation process was based on a model that engaged the communities to informally discuss and deliberate on the performance of the welfare and relief schemes. The strategy of scoring relief schemes was adopted because the responsiveness and accountability of government towards citizens is part of their DNA. The CCSC exercise informed communities about their rights and entitlements and the roles and responsibilities of service providers.

The exercise capacitated the local communities in two ways; first, it enhanced their awareness about governance practices and patterns that impinge upon their livelihood and second, it encouraged them to translate this knowledge into informed collective action for the creation of a more responsive and accountable system of governance.

Inaccessible governance arrangement

Absence of effective mechanisms of grievance redressal meant that the highest agency of grievance redressal for the communities was the local *panchayat*, which was constrained in several ways to deal with the impact of a policy or a regulation on the lives of the villagers. (A *Panchayat* is the term for locally elected, village self-governance councils, whose administrative jurisdiction is congruous to the geography of village or villages they represent. *Panchayats* are recognised as the third tier of government by law in India.) Engagement or interaction between government and communities was limited or inadequate to address the major concerns of the villagers.

PAC and PAD have been involved in sensitising government officials and the local community to the goals of active citizenship and increased accountability. The organisations have been actively involved in securing a governance arrangement that supports a harmonious and mutually beneficial engagement between government and citizens.

To a significant extent, the initiative has been able to generate consensus for a system of governance facilitated by a meaningful dialogue between government and citizens. The district

workshop with the government officials was the first progressive step in this direction. This was important as it involved key government officials from different departments in the region. The purpose was to orient the agents of government about the project and secure their support for its effective implementation. The CCSC exercise was seen as a process to strengthen the demand for and accelerate the supply of accountability in governance. It is a challenge, however, to ensure that this engagement is productive and meaningful and does not culminate in a clash of interests.

Lessons Learned

Local Partner as the entry point

Securing adequate involvement for any community-based exercise remains a big challenge. In case of the coastal communities, the villagers depended on fishing and palmyrah tapping as their primary source of livelihood. Meeting their daily livelihood needs remained a priority over other activities that demanded their time. PAD succeeded in harnessing the collective spirit of the community because of its credibility and recognition amongst the villagers. Initiating the process and aligning its objectives with the needs of the community was possible because of PAD's knowledge and understanding of the local context and its demands. Moreover, generating the necessary acceptance for its efforts was easy because of its strong ties with the villagers.

The field study underlined how important it was for an organisation to have a strong local presence to overcome such challenges and advance the goal of active community participation.

Localising the score card process

It is difficult to engage local communities in discussions on the larger questions of climate change and its impact, environmental governance and active citizenship. CCSC is a participatory performance monitoring tool wherein citizens are involved in evaluating and monitoring public service delivery. Since explaining the significance of the tool among largely illiterate communities is a challenge, it was important to give the intervention a local context.

The process of information gathering and dissemination was kept simple and informal to ensure active participation of villagers. Also, only issues directly impacting their lives were included. Monitoring and evaluating welfare schemes was an excellent way to record their perception about existing practices and governance.

The basic design of the implementation strategy managed to secure active involvement of the communities by creating a pool of its representatives, drawn from amongst the community. They were mostly local village leaders. The findings of the input-tracking and CCSC exercise would be discussed with these representatives and an action plan would be prepared including a framework for future course of action. They will also present the action plan to government representatives at the interface meeting. The strategy is to enable increased community ownership of the process.

State and citizen interface

CCSC has been adopted as a window for the government to directly engage with the communities. It will also be a medium to enable citizens to channel their concerns and grievances into a productive dialogue with the state. The emphasis here is on constructive engagement. It aims to identify key government agents willing to support such efforts and facilitate increased interaction between them and the communities. There are several mechanisms in the state apparatus that communities can use to access the state. However, CCSC is unique as it creates an arrangement through which the views and opinions of the citizens is received, processed and translated into improvements in the existing system of service delivery.

Potential for Scale-Up

Given that PAC has created a supportive environment for social accountability, there is potential for increasing the impact and relevance of the project in the region by increasing its geographic and thematic scope. The organisation is already considering replicating its efforts in the semi-arid areas of Wayanad, Kerala and the highlands of Northern

Karnataka. The CCSC, however, has to be redesigned to suit the distinctiveness of different regions.

Within GoM there is a clear possibility of going beyond fishermen and palmyra workers and including other communities. Extending the project to agricultural farmers would not only focus attention on the impact of environment on farm labourers but also on larger food security issues. In view of the organisation's achievements with a citizen-centric approach in the GoM, replicating these efforts in other areas of governance can prove to be advantageous.

Widening the approach is probable as the pre-conditions of trust, basic awareness and support of government officials has been achieved to some extent through two years of intensive advocacy. The organisation can consider integrating more stakeholders into the initiative and widening its geographical scope to translate its efforts into effective governance at both local and state levels.

PAC's implementation strategy successfully gained the participation and commitment of block and district-level state authorities in the pilot phase of the initiative. It can now consider pursuing these efforts at the state level. Although this may demand more time and effort, persisting intensive engagements with the higher echelons of power can secure the organisation the policy-level reforms that it seeks. PAC needs to develop and strengthen an effective top-down approach to sustain the impact of its project in the long run.

Moreover, by extending the coverage of the initiative to other districts and their local governance structures, the organisation can push its agenda at the policy making level with greater force. Since the ultimate objective is to expand and deepen the levels of accountability through active citizenship and responsible governance practices, existing opportunities need to be leveraged to promote a culture of accountability across the sector.

ANNEX

Annex 1: About The Implementing Organisation

Public Affairs Centre (PAC) is a leading non-profit and non-partisan Indian civil society organisation (CSO) dedicated to mobilise a demand for good governance in India. Their vision is vision to improve the quality of public governance in India by creating vibrant, informed and proactive citizen engagements with the state and its institutions. The focus of PAC is primarily in areas where citizens and CSOs can play a proactive role in improving governance. They have expertise in conducting citizen's report card, public policy research and channelling funds to improve accountability in public service delivery in India. Their services have been sought internationally for consultancy on World Bank, UK's Department for International Development, Asian Development Bank and other renowned donors. PAC implemented the project: Enhancing Community Centered Governance in Climate Change Affected Coastal Areas in southern Tamil Nadu, Bangalore.

Annex 2: Interview Questionnaire

Stakeholders

1. PAC, PAD, community and the government are the major stakeholders in the project. Can you please elaborate on their respective roles?
2. What were the objectives behind partnering with PAD for the fulfillment of the goals of the project?

Social Accountability Tool

3. Why does PAC accord significance to the use of social accountability tools like PRA and social mapping against other methods of information gathering?
4. Why do you think it was necessary to increase the monitoring of the existing governance structure by the communities themselves?
5. Can you explain the way in which communities monitor effective functioning of the governance structures?
6. What is the scope of such a community based monitoring mechanism? Is it restricted only to the level of interface sessions with the agents of governance?

Outcomes

7. What has been the response of government authorities and officials towards these efforts?
8. One of the primary goals of the project is to reduce the gaps between official policy and legislations, official practice, climate change impact and the community needs. How far has this been achieved?
9. Can you identify the ways in which the communities have benefited with help of enhanced knowledge about climate change, its impact and related regulations?
10. In what ways does a community centric model benefits the governance structures at different levels?
11. What have been the major challenges confronting the project? In what ways have these been addressed?
12. To what extent is this model replicable? What are the necessary preconditions for the model to be successful? Give suggestions/recommendations.
13. How can a social accountability approach favour good governance?

CASE STUDY 8

Social Watch Group For Social
Accountability And Governance

Introduction

New development approaches of the government to realise the ideal of decentralised democracy are heralding major changes in the delivery of services across the country. As policy directives increasingly emphasise on people-centric, demand driven development interventions, 'beneficiaries' are becoming 'clients' with specific rights and entitlements. However, citizen participation and government accountability remain areas of concern.

Mistrust in government has created a gap between citizens and state leading to a sense of alienation among people. There is consequently a need to deepen the level of people-state engagement in the process of governance. As citizens go from being beneficiaries to clients, the focus of accountability is also changing from

Intervention	Social Audit
Location	Mayurbhanj, Odisha
Organisation	SAMBANDH
Sector	Livelihood–National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
Target Audience	Rural households, MGNREGA beneficiaries
Geographic Scope	16 *Panchayats* of Thakurmunda Block, Mayurbhanj District

supply to the demand side. People rely increasingly upon civic engagement for holding government officials accountable for the delivery of superior services.

This case study intends to capture the experience of SAMBANDH, a Bhubaneswar-based non-profit organisation that worked at strengthening demand-side governance for improved implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in the Thakurmunda block of Mayurbhanj district in Odisha.

SAMBANDH adopted an inclusive strategy to empower the community in a sustained manner. Most importantly, the Social Watch Groups (SWG), comprising representatives of the community, Self Help Groups (SHGs), *Panchayati Raj* Institutions (PRIs), media and officials from line departments, was formed to continuously mobilize the community. (Panchayati, pertains to Panchayat, which is the term for locally elected, village self-governance councils, whose administrative jurisdiction is congruous to the geography of village or villages they represent. Panchayats, or more appropriately, *Panchayati Raj* Institutions, are recognised as a third tier of government by law in India.) While SAMBANDH co-ordinated the project, SWGs executed its individual elements. Rural Call Centres (RCC) were set up to plug information gaps in the schemes. SAMBANDH has developed four gram *panchayats* as models for others to emulate.

Thus far, the most pronounced impact of the project is the increased level of awareness among communities on their rights and entitlements under MGNREGA. The standards of service delivery have also improved. Wage payments have been regularised, unemployment allowances are being paid, and social audits now involve citizen representatives. Continuous monitoring and meaningful dialogue with different stakeholders have been instrumental in strengthening accountability in the government's performance and sensitising citizens about their rights and responsibilities in the implementation of MGNREGA.

Context

Odisha is among India's most backward states. According to Government of India's Economic Survey 2011-12, the state has a poverty ratio of 57.2 per cent against an all-India average of about 37.2 [1]. Nearly 39.80 per cent of Odisha's rural population is below the poverty line[2]. This grim scenario has taken a serious toll on the livelihood of people living in the rural areas. Although the government has introduced a number of employment generation programmes, 1.393 million people were unemployed in the state at the end of Eleventh Plan period.

In such a scenario, programmes like the MGNREGA are of great significance to the state. The demand-driven programme gives rural households guaranteed employment of 100 days a year. Besides creating jobs, MGNREGA also builds local assets by identifying priority areas for work through community participation in micro plans prepared by panchayats. If poor road connectivity is the problem for a village's economy, health and education, then the panchayats can channel funds to that area resulting in the creation of valuable local assets.

However, the implementation of MGNREGA in Odisha has been widely reported to be inefficient and corrupt. In May 2011, the Supreme Court directed the CBI to probe misappropriation of MGNREGA funds in 100 villages of the state[3]. Because of the state's failure to implement the scheme transparently, the Government of India sanctioned only 25 per cent of the total fund earmarked for it in 2011-12.[4] Evidently, the Odisha Government's effort to accomplish the objectives of MGNREGA has suffered due to corruption.

To improve the situation, SAMBANDH decided to initiate a programme to institutionalise social accountability so that there is meaningful civic engagement. The SWG project has been in operation since February 2010 in the Thakurmunda block of Mayurbhanj district in Odisha.

1. Government of India. Ministry of Finance. Economic Survey 2011-12. Web on 04 April 2012. < http://indiabudget.nic.in/es2011-12/echap-13.pdf/>.
2. Government of India. Planning Commission. Odisha Economic Survey, 2008-09.
3. The Economic Times. Web on 13 May 2011. < http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2011-05-13/news/29540215_1_sc-orders-cbi-probe-implementation-state-governments/>.
4. Odisha Diary on 20 June 2011. <http://orissadiary.com/CurrentNews.asp?id=27366/>.

Prior to SAMBANDH's intervention, the implementation of MGNREGA in Thakurmunda was plagued by corruption and inefficiency relating to procurement in particular. Contractors did not follow the guidelines, job card applications were not processed, fake job card entries were made, muster rolls were irregular and unemployment allowance was not given to community members. Apart from these discrepancies on the supply side, the demand side was marked by low awareness among the largely illiterate community members who did not, therefore, have the capacity to demand and pressure the administration for effective service delivery. Most critically, failure to identify MGNREGA as a demand-driven program impeded success.

At the same time, since the process of political socialisation was yet to take off in the region, its people remained outside the government's planning and implementation programmes. Although *gram sabhas* and *palli sabhas*[5] existed, their presence had not translated into active community involvement. Further, social audit, which is an integral part of MGNREGA, happened only on paper and was done by a handful of government officials and the *sarpanch* with zero community participation.

Social Accountability Process

Recognising the importance of social audits for ensuring transparency, SAMBANDH obtained the government's approval to conduct them at 16 gram panchayats in Thakurmunda block. The government selected SAMBANDH because of its credibility and extensive presence in the entire block of Thakurmunda[6].

A discussion among the stakeholders revealed many problems with the implementation of the scheme across the block. In Bharandia, Jarak and *Kedujuani panchayats* the workers complained of not receiving wages even after a year. In all the *panchayats* wages had been delayed for at least 3-4 months after completion of the work. According to the guidelines workers are to be paid on a weekly basis and, in any case, within a fortnight of completion of work. Unemployment

allowance had also not been paid to anyone in any of the *gram panchayats*. There were other challenges as well such as inaccessible *panchayat* offices, absence of any work measurement documents and complaint registers and unavailability of transportation for workers.

The social audit showed that the selection of work under MGNREGA was rarely done on the basis of the micro-plan for the village, which often resulted in misappropriation of resources, wastage of labour hours and non-creation of any local assets valuable for the community. For instance, in Khandabandh and Saleibeda gram *panchayats*, resources were allocated for construction of ponds even though there was no requirement for them in the villages. The work had to be halted as the rocky terrain made the dig very difficult.

Social audit was, therefore, considered an apt tool to bridge information gaps in schemes and services as it facilitated access to government records. It also made it mandatory for local officials to be a part of a concluding meeting with the community and to quickly redress public grievances.

Key stakeholders
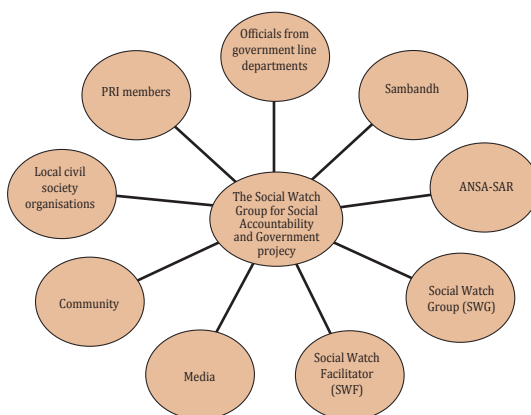
Figure 1: SAMBANDH has effectively drawn together a large number of stakeholders to create an effective and inclusive implementation strategy for the project to monitor the implementation of MGNREGA.

[5.] Orissa Grama Panchayat Act, 1964 provides for the constitution of *Palli Sabha* in an area that constitutes a ward of the village i.e. when multiple contiguous villages constitute one village, the neighbouring villages will have *Palli Sabha*. Each *Palli Sabha* shall consist of all persons registered in the electoral roll for Assembly Constituency to the area in respect of the *Palli Sabha*.

[6.] SAMBANDH's credibility is based on three criteria: a) regular interaction with district administration to brief the status of different interventions undertaken by SAMBANDH, b) transparency in its working and sharing information, and c) a range of successful interventions in different areas of development.

Implementation Strategy

Conlexlualising social accountability	• Conducting baseline survey in seven out of 16 *gram panchyats* of Thakurmunda • Holding interactive sesions with the community for qualitative analysis of survey findings
Creation of community driven inplementing bodies	• Formation of Social Watch Group (SWG) • Selection of Social Watch Facilitators (SWF) • Establishment of Rural Call Centre (RCC) • Formation of 4 model *gram panchayats*
Building community awareness	• Organisation of informative sessions on MGNREGA • Launch of travel media workshop to broaden project coverage • Putting up of display boards for information dissemination • Use of RTI to procure information • Conducting a social audit for community mobilisation
Capacity building	• Regular workshop of SWG and SWFs • Training of *panchayat* officials on provisions and due proceses of MGNREGA • Training of community members on filling application forms throught RCC
Monitoring and evaluation of project	• SWC intcrface meeting • Monthly staff meeting and head office monitoring • Regular multi stakeholder workshop

Figure 2: The implementation strategy adopted by SAMBANDH operates on building the capacities of the government officials as well as community members.

Programme Structure

The SWGs were created at the block level to establish a cohesive network of individuals and organisations who could mobilise the community for active and meaningful participation leading to decentralised and independent assessment of the project implementation. The group had SHG representatives, civil society organisations, local schools, government departments, locally elected PRI members, people's representatives to legislative assemblies, local leaders, and media persons. Civil society organisations were identified on the basis of their expertise as well as experience in strengthening the system of local governance and in initiating social accountability campaigns in public service delivery. The inclusion of members from varied backgrounds helped in understanding the context while setting the agenda and implementing strategies. Interestingly, the

group also included media persons and unsuccessful PRI candidates to check any bias in decision-making. The presence of the media helped in exposing the corruption in MGNREGA to administrators at higher levels and community members. At present, in Thakurmunda, there are a total of 60 SWG members drawn from 156 villages.

While SWGs are in constant dialogue with the community, their presence is limited to the block level. So, a network of community leaders, known as Social Watch Facilitators (SWF) was identified for the panchayat level. Two to three SWFs were selected from each of the 16 panchayats covering 156 villages. Thereupon capacity building workshops were organised by SAMBANDH to disseminate information on MGNREGA, Right to Information, and social accountability tools. Participants were also exposed to different government offices such as police stations, *tehsil* office, block office, ranger office, ICDS office, agricultural office, hospitals, United Bank of India, and others to gain practical knowledge on filing RTI and institutions related to MGNREGA in the blocks.

The next concern was to empower the community by closing the information gap on government schemes. Hence, a Rural Call Center (RCC) was established at the block level by SAMBANDH in July 2010 as a single-window source for information, facilitation for RTI and job applications and establishment of linkages

with government departments. Earlier the panchayat office, which was ineffective as it remained closed most times, was the only source of information on government schemes. Information on various government services was collected by the entrepreneur in-charge of RCC. Further, as the community has trouble understanding and filling up various application forms, the RCC entrepreneur lends a helping hand.

To test the model of good governance, SAMBANDH selected four out of 16 panchayats of the Thakurmunda block as showcase prototypes of effective governance. PRI members of these *panchayats* were not completely aware of provisions and implementation strategies of different schemes. Even the mandatory social audit exercises were not conducted as per guidelines, thereby reducing transparency and accountability of government operations. SAMBANDH's intervention led to adequate training that sensitised PRI members on the scope of social accountability tools and how they can enhance government's legitimacy. Upon completion of activities in these *panchayats*, they were showcased for others to scale up their activities. Lastly, travel media workshops were organised by SAMBANDH to acquaint media with the issues and challenges faced by the community on a day-to-day basis and to discuss various aspects of MGNREGA implementation and implications in the local context. The biggest plus from the initiative is that even the most remote parts are now connected with the media. This has helped the region expose issues like inefficiency and delays. This is backed up by follow up activities like meetings with stakeholders to check whether the administration has taken adequate measures to address the problems.

Information Education Communication (IEC) materials

SAMBANDH circulates a quarterly newsletter to create awareness among community members on different issues related to rights and entitlement under schemes like MGNREGA. Display boards are also put up in key locations for disseminating information on MGNREGA.

Step 1
* Focus group discussion

Step 2
* Problem analysis and information collection

Step 3
* Interface with the community

Step 4
* Media highlight of the issue
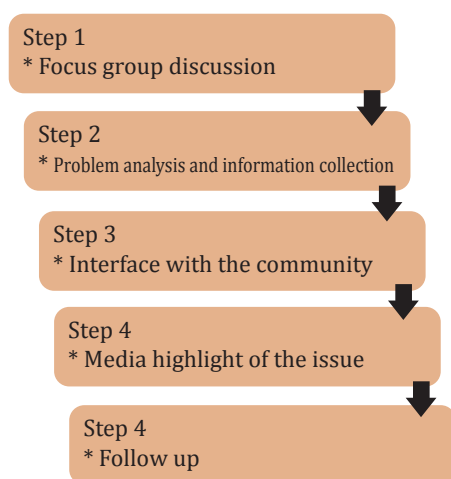
Step 4
* Follow up

Figure 3: The flow of process adopted by SAMBANDH's travel media workshops aims to make the media aware of challenges faced by the community on a daily basis, generate awareness among community members and highlight the cases of inconsistency in implementation of MGNREGA.

Programme brochures are published in English and Oriya highlighting the project's goals and objectives. A set of brochures is also designed listing the role and responsibilities of different stakeholders and distributed widely across villages. The RCC brochure seeks to popularise the centre among the community.

Level of Participation

Overall, the project benefited from the active involvement of beneficiaries and the service providers. SAMBANDH's rapport with the community helped build trust for the activities. Before the campaigns, community members did not participate in the implementation and monitoring of MGNREGA. But the recent survey reveals that 18 per cent of the surveyed people acknowledged increased participation in MGNREGA implementation. Sixty one per cent of the surveyed population of Thakurmunda participated in the social audit conducted by SAMBANDH, in sharp contrast to similar audits during 2006-2010 when community participation was zero. Regular interactions of the SWFs with the community and awareness campaigns, particularly the travel media workshop, have been instrumental in enhancing the interest and capacity of the community members.

Ensuring participation of service providers proves to be a challenge in the Indian context. Therefore, SAMBANDH was meticulous in arranging interactive sessions to sensitise the government representatives regarding the concept of social accountability. Since SAMBANDH was successful in getting government's approval for conducting social audit, it was able to engage with them more actively. The *gram panchayats*, particularly the four model GPs, are now capacitated to mobilise effective community participation in preparation of village micro-plans and selection of MGNREGA work according to the village specific priorities.

Name of gram *panchayat*	Total number of households	Total number of participants in social audit
Bhaliadal	676	245
Bharandia	1203	425
Champajhar	1780	612
Digdhar	1712	585
Hatigoda	1152	411
Jarak	1696	643
Kendujiani	1086	383
Kesdiha	1802	613
Khandbandh	1128	413
Mahuldiha	921	312
Padiabeda	1379	475
Salchua	1379	465
Saleibeda	949	320
Satkosia	1356	453
Talapada	1267	429
Thakurmunda	**1913**	**676**

Table 1: A significant percentage of population has been participating in the social audit exercises organised by SAMBANDH.

Impact

Large scale increase in awareness level of the community

A major cause for MGNREGA's failure to create substantial impact is the lack of awareness among intended beneficiaries that the entitlements under the Act are constitutionally protected. The baseline survey conducted by SAMBANDH indicated that prior to SAMBANDH's engagement with implementation and monitoring of MGNREGA in Thakurmunda, the community was mostly unaware of specific entitlements under the Act . Only 31 per cent of the people in Thakurmunda had basic understanding of the Act[7]. They did not know that they had the right to approach the *panchayat* and ask for work. Therefore, particular emphasis was laid on spreading awareness.

The interactive sessions held with the community by SWG facilitated a process of learning which is reflected in the survey conducted in February 2012. Compared to the earlier 31 per cent, the survey indicated that an impressive 81 per cent of the sample was now aware of the standard wage rates, the provision of equal pay for men and women and unemployment allowances and mandated facilities at work sites. Most are now aware that the minimum wage rate is Rs 125 for Odisha (Rs 57 make 1 US$).

[7]. Baseline survey was conducted in seven out of 16 gram panchayats of Thakurmunda namely Bharandia, Talapada, Champajhar, Salachua, Satakosia, Keshdiha and Hatigoda, during March-April 2010.

With an increase in awareness, people have developed an interest and capacity for demanding information and entitlements. Further, the FGD findings suggest that women are now more capable of understanding the Act's provisions on their own and seeking equal wages. Participation of women in MGNREGA-related work has also increased to 60 per cent in Thakurmunda, which is the highest in district Mayurbhanj.

Improvement in service delivery

The project has had the effect of putting into action the concepts of accountability in governance. The baseline survey conducted by SAMBANDH suggests that none of the community members had received unemployment allowance prior to the introduction of social audit. However, recent FGDs with the community revealed that there has been a remarkable change in the scenario. Between January 2010 and December 2011, 54 people received unemployment allowance in Thakurmunda.

Further, the capacity building exercises has created an ethos of efficient local governance in implementing public schemes such as MGNREGA. To ensure that the panchayat offices do not close during scheduled working hours, a strike was organised by the community members, with help from SAMBANDH, to protest against the prevalent attitude. The strike brought the matter to the attention of district administration and, subsequently, an order was issued to the *gram panchayat*. Since then the *panchayat* office has been accessible to the citizens during the officially mandated hours.

The project also has had an impact on the implementation of other schemes such as National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and Public Distribution System (PDS) in Thakurmunda. In line with capacity building programmes organised for SWG, PRI leaders and government officials for facilitating effective implementation of MGNREGA, training programmes were designed for members of gaon kalyan samities formed to monitor work under NRHM.

Out of 95 people surveyed in four *gram Panchayats*, Bausapani, Bharandia, Khamandiya, Laxmiposi, of Thakurmunda block, 69 agreed that that local government is now more accountable for its performance with regard to MGNREGA.

Deepening engagement between government and citizens

The social audit exercise conducted by SAMBANDH in all *panchayats* of the block has worked to bridge the gap between the government and citizens and create a conducive environment for promoting social accountability. Citizens now have the opportunity to directly express their grievances and demands to the service providers; the service providers have the opportunity to redress grievances and receive direct feedback from their clients. Eighteen per cent of the surveyed population feel empowered to participate in MGNREGA's planning and implementation process.

Improved interaction between the government and citizens has been instrumental in redressing one of the major issues of MGNREGA, which is the problem of selection of low priority and inappropriate work, and work based on vested interests. The community members now feel empowered to participate in prioritising their needs in the MGNREGA planning process. For example, the Thakurmunda *gram panchayat* planned to construct a pond in the village. The community protested and proposed an asset that serves an urgent need of the community. Further, earlier, the vigilance committee members rarely visited the worksite[8] but now it has been regularised with effective stakeholder mobilisation. It has established regular interface meetings between the service providers and the beneficiaries - resulting in active participation from the community.

Key Challenges and Mitigation Measures

Negotiating the local power structure

A major challenge faced in the initial stage of project implementation was in the area of

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[8]. Local level vigilance committee members are comprised of school teachers, Anganwadi workers, SHG members, social audit volunteers, members of community based organisations, youth clubs etc. function of this committee is to visit worksite and interact with workers to verify records and onsite facilities, to assess quality of materials and costs and to prepare an end-of-work report. (An Anganwadi center is a village crèche. Though mainly for the children farm laborers, these assume primacy as delivery points for all village-level mother-and-child interventions by the government.)

mitigating constraints imposed by those with vested interest. Earlier the contractors, taking advantage of the ignorance of workers, overlooked the basic guidelines of service delivery. Minimum wage rate was not maintained, men and women were not paid equal wages, and basic facilities like drinking water, shelter, crèche and first aid box were not provided at work sites. However, the level of awareness of the community about their rights and entitlements under MGNREGA has now increased, provoking the contractors to act both covertly and overtly against the project and its stakeholders.

Earlier officials were averse to sharing information and even threatened community members who asked for it under RTI. However, as the social accountability project institutionalised itself and gained the community's support, such instances became rare. The collaboration with the media has helped in establishing the credibility of the project.

Enhancing access of information

Other than their non-cooperative attitude, the ignorance of officials too was a major hindrance to accessing information. The low level of knowledge and skill among the *Gram Rozgar Sanyojak* (or mate, entrusted with maintaining employment records for employments under MGNREGA) and lack of updated information with government departments created an information gap for the project implementers. The sensitisation and skill development programmes of officials have been able to change this. In addition, RTI was used wherever getting information was proving difficult.

Motivating the community members

The community's acceptance of social accountability tools was important for achieving the objectives of the project. However, the community lacked faith in government schemes such as MGNREGA owing to rampant corruption, nepotism and other irregularities in job allocations and payments. This posed a major challenge in motivating the community to be involved. Extensive community mobilisation programmes undertaken by the SWFs and the SWG were eventually successful in garnering the trust of the community in government schemes and in explaining the importance of strengthening the demand side of accountability to streamline efficiency and transparency in service delivery.

Community participation in work selection and budget allocation

As per MGNREGA guidelines, the selection of work must be on the basis of the micro-plan of the village so that along with the generation of employment, valuable local assets can be created. However, a major challenge appeared in terms of selection of work under MGNREGA. Instead of adopting a people-centric and decentralised approach, most work was selected according to the interests of certain groups. This resulted in selection works that were low priority for the community. This resulted in misallocation of funds and other resources. SAMBANDH highlighted these instances in media and gathered community support to press the administration for selection of MGNREGA work on the basis of the micro planning-a process that enables every part of the community to chalk out its own development agenda and the means to achieve it.

Strengthening the regional network

SAMBANDH realised the importance of institutionalising the social accountability process through integration of individuals, communities and organisations from different sectors to raise a collective voice. However, there was a lack of strong regional network to take charge of the project. SAMBANDH took the first step in establishing an exhaustive network of individuals, citizen groups, media persons, government officials and PRI members to engage in the social watch process for fostering continuous conversation, fact-finding, information and knowledge-sharing among the practitioners.

Lessons Learned

The social accountability initiative of SAMBANDH is woven around the standard social accountability approach that includes accessing information, making the voice of citizens heard

and engaging in a process of negotiation for change.[9]

Democratisation of information and knowledge

A major achievement of the project has been its emphasis on addressing the information gap in the community and thereafter using information as a tool for social and individual empowerment. SAMBANDH utilised RTI to enable the flow of information from government agencies so that people could access and use it to exercise their political, economic and legal rights and to make appropriate choices for participation in the development process. As MGNREGA guidelines stand for proactive disclosure of information at all levels, the RTI helps the process of good, accountable governance, along with establishing citizens both as beneficiaries and agents of development. Realising that information is a key driver of transparent and efficient governance, SAMBANDH emphasised on creating a demand for information. It promoted information literacy among people to help them decide upon the process for procuring it and the potential use of such information to participate effectively in democratic processes. Through meaningful and constant dialogue with government officials, SAMBANDH has sought to initiate the process of proactive and suo motu disclosure of information.

Social ownership of development

Democratic ownership legitimises development priorities and processes by transferring to citizens the rights and responsibilities of planning and implementing schemes in collaboration with government. Social ownership comes from active community participation in setting the agenda, proposing policy and strategy options and shaping dialogues for project implementation. This process recognises the ability of the citizens to decide on development issues rationally. In order to encourage communities to assume ownership of the project, SAMBANDH analysed their composition, needs, priorities, challenges and strengths. This gave SAMBANDH clarity on the kind of framework needed for community mobilisation. With the formation of SWG and the capacity-building of SWFs as interfaces between community and the

implementing agency, SAMBANDH turned the project into a sustainable and people-centric intervention.
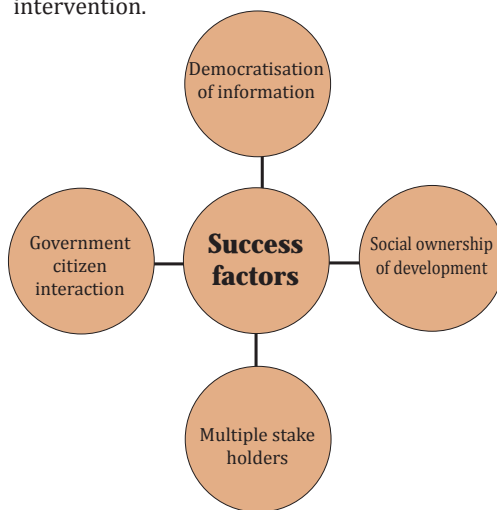
Figure 2: Success factors of the project

Efficient partnership with multiple stake holders

SAMBANDH has created a forum for multi-stakeholder interaction for planning and monitoring development strategies that are essential for inclusive social and political programmes. SAMBANDH brings together actors from different social, cultural and political spheres to give insight on existing realities, needs and grievances. As the SWG incorporates agents from both the community and government, it has an impact on both demand and supply sides of accountability. Integration of various community based organisations (CBOs) such as farmers club, SHGs, Udyan Vikash Samiti and youth clubs helped SAMBANDH in information dissemination. SAMBANDH also included other civil society organisations such as Pradan, Centre for Youth and Social Development to form a platform for knowledge sharing and dissemination on pressing development concerns. To facilitate regular interaction of stakeholders for knowledge-sharing, different activities like multi stakeholders' workshops, distribution of newsletters and executive committee meetings were taken up. Such multiple stakeholder collaboration has brought diverse perspectives and internal checks to the

9.
 The building blocks are identified by the Civic Engagement Analytical Framework, an analytical tool designed by the Participation and Civic Engagement Group of the World Bank to assess the conditions for civic engagement

project and resulted in an exhaustive framework for successful project implementation.

Government and citizen interactions

SAMBANDH recognises the implication of integrating the demand and supply sides of accountability for affecting a comprehensive change in service delivery. Formation of SWG and the use of social accountability tools like RTI have facilitated the process of interaction and negation between government and citizens, paving the way for innovative and practical methods for project implementation. Improved interaction enhances social cohesion because communities now recognise the value of working together and with statutory agencies. For service providers, the process helps in garnering direct feedback from beneficiaries that enables consensus building and leads to recognition of good work.

Potential for Scale-Up

During the two years of its operation, the project has largely been able to spread awareness on MGNREGA as a demand-driven approach. However, rights-based advocacy is still an alien concept. Mainstreaming of social accountability would, therefore, require more time and intensive effort. There are plans to introduce certain social accountability tools, manuals and MIS registers to strengthen the capacity of both the community as well as government to take social accountability intervention to the next level. These measures are expected to leverage existing awareness and abilities on both demand and supply sides of accountability and thereby integrate social accountability into regular political and administrative processes. Apart from the social audit exercise taken up in association with 16 *gram panchayats*, SAMBANDH has developed a toolkit for assisting the social watch group in project implementation. Its two main components are the travel media workshop and the community score card (CSC). The former is already functional and the CSC will be introduced in March 2012.

SAMBANDH has identified the scope of introducing CSC for closely engaging community members in identification of key issues and grievances in relation to MGNREGA. It has also allowed meaningful interactions between the administration and citizens for service delivery. This tool is used by the community members to rate the quality of services using a grading system in the form of scores. As the generation of scores translates into generation of dialogue between community and service providers it also opens up space for self-evaluation and further enhancements for those planning and implementing the programmes.

CSC offers a user-friendly social accountability tool that allows the community to speak for itself and, thereby assures authentic and impartial measurement of service delivery standards. It also allows the service providers to rate their own services and receive direct user feedback for enhancing their proficiency. This process is crucial for sensitising the community and the officials to each other's demands and suggestions, which paves the way for good and accountable governance.

The attributes of CSC as designed by SAMBANDH seek to use the community as a unit of analysis which would generate information through FGDs. The CSC would be conducted at the local level by enabling maximum participation of the local community. It would rate the performance of panchayat officials and contractors on criteria that include access to MGNREGA, knowledge and attitude toward the scheme, provisions and processes under the Act, efficiency in grievance redressal, enhancement in transparency and accountability in governance, perception of panchayat officials and community members on the impact of the scheme and efficacy of the assets created.

A Management Information System (MIS) register will be introduced for inclusion in the project. Gram panchayats will be trained by SAMBANDH on the scope and usage of these registers. Although these registers maintain the standard government format, SAMBANDH has customised them in keeping with relevant suggestions and preferences expressed by the gram panchayats. Different MIS registers would be maintained for different government schemes, apart from MGNREGA.

As the approach and impact of the project indicates a sharp increase in the level of

awareness and improved interactions between government and community, it exhibits substantial potential of both geographic and thematic scale up. As the project implemented in Thakurmunda has been beneficial in improving livelihood options of tribal populations living below the poverty line, this should be used as a model to design suitable projects in other underdeveloped blocks of Mayurbhanj district (such as Tiring, Udala and Jamada) or in other adjacent undeveloped districts (such as Keonjhar, Kendrapara, Sundergarh and Sambalpur), which are largely inhabited by tribal people and are facing the same constraints as Thakurmunda in accessing government services.

As the project has been successful in bringing both qualitative and quantitative changes in service delivery of the MGNREGA scheme, it can be customised to improve service delivery of other government programmes and schemes such as National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA - a campaign for total literacy) and Public distribution System (PDS, mandated to reach subsidised food and non-food items to the poor).

ANNEX

Annex 1: About The Implementing Organisation

SAMBANDH was established in the year 1992 to build cooperative and mutually supportive relations with a range of civil society stakeholders to form the social watch process for ensuring accountability and good governance. Sambandh has made considerable success in public service delivery, community based monitoring process, and policy related public awareness campaigns, protests and demonstrations on the issues that affect governance. SAMBANDH works in 37blocks of 9 districts in Orissa with the support from European commission, DIPECHO, UNDP, Welthungerhilfe, BMZ, KFW, NABARD, MoEF, Ayush, NMPB, Misereor, PTF and BD. Sambandh has selected as a Nodal Agency for the state of Orissa by Ministry of Environment and Forest, Govt. of India.

Annex 2: Interview Questionnaire

Background

1. What were the criteria for selecting Thakurmunda block in Mayurbhanj district for project implementation?
2. What were the major challenges being faced in the implementation of MGNREGS in Thakurmunda?
3. Please specify the exact roles of the following stakeholders in the project:
   i. SAMBANDH
   ii. Social Watch Group members
   iii. Social Watch Centre entrepreneurs
   iv. Government officials - PRI members/MLAs
   v. Media representatives
   vi. Community members
4. Are there any other stakeholders in the project? If yes, what are their roles and responsibilities?

Implementation Strategies

5. According to our research, the main components of the project are the Social Watch Group, Social Watch Centre (Knowledge Information Centre), Rural Call Centre, single window service for grievance redressal, social audits, travelling media workshops, community monitoring scorecard, toolkit for localising SWG and MIS register. Are there any other components of the project?
6. Knowledge Information Centre/Social Watch Centre:
   i. What are the main roles of the KIC? (information dissemination, grievance redressal, documentation etc)
   ii. What is the organisational structure of the KIC? Are these established at the block or district level?
   iii. Please elaborate on the ICT infrastructure utilised in the KIC - CMS, dedicated website, SMS services and any other.
   iv. How many KICs are currently in operation?

v. How is the performance of KICs monitored and evaluated?

vi. Please provide details of training workshops organised for entrepreneurs who run the KICs.

vii. According to our research, it is aimed to develop KICs along a business model in order to ensure their sustainability. Please share the details of this model.

viii. What have been the achievements of the KIC?

ix. What are the major challenges faced in the regular functioning of KICs? How are these overcome?

x. Are there any enhancements in the planning?

7. Social Watch Groups:
   i. What are the main responsibilities of the SWG?

   ii. How is the SWG organised? At what level do they function?

   iii. What kind of information about MGNREGS is disseminated by the SWG?

   iv. What is implied by 'toolkit for localising SWG'?

   v. How are the SWG members trained? Please provide details of the training sessions and workshops.

   vi. How many SWGs are currently in operation?

   vii. How does the SWG conduct social audits at the village level?

   viii. How is the performance of SWGs monitored and evaluated?

   ix. What have been the major achievements of the SWGs?

   x. What are the main challenges faced by the SWGs?

8. Rural Call Centres:
   i. What is the main role of the RCC?
   ii. What is the organisational structure of the RCC?
   iii. What is the infrastructural set up of the RCC?
   iv. How many RCCs are currently in operation? Where are they based?
   v. At what number is the RCC reachable? What are the call charges that accrue to callers?

vi. What are the reasons for which villagers most seek assistance from the RCC? Please provide details of calls received by the RCC over the period of its/their operation, in terms of village, caller profiles, and information sought.

vii. Are there any enhancements in the planning?

9. Community Monitoring Scorecards

According to our research, community monitoring scorecards comprise of four components:

(a) An input tracking scorecard

i. How are measurable input indicators identified?

ii. What is the community's participation in this process?

(b) Community generated performance scorecard

i. How are performance criteria set?

ii. Who are the facilitators for leading focus groups of community members in this instance? How is the process facilitated?

(c) Self-evaluation scorecard by service providers

i. How have the 16 panchayats responded to community monitoring processes? What has been the extent of their participation in this?

ii. Has any evaluation of performance occurred from their side?

(d) Interface meetings between users and providers to provide feedback and generate a mutually reformed agenda

i. How many interface meetings have been organised till date?

ii. How do you assess the participation from PRI members, community members, SAMBANDH and media representatives in the meetings?

iii. What have been the outcomes of these meetings?

10. Grievance Redressal

i. What is the single window grievance redressal system?

ii. Please provide data on the grievances filed by the villagers till date - nature of grievance (wage payment, job demand, muster rolls, availability of facilities workers are entitled to and such like), total number of complaints received under each head in every month of project operation, number of complaints successfully disposed, mechanisms adopted for disposal of complaints.

11. What is the purpose of the MIS register?

i. How is the data collected for this?

ii. How is it prepared?

iii. Where is the information hosted and who can access it?

iv. What is the information utilised for?

12. What is a model gram panchayat?

Monitoring and Evaluation

13. What is the Project Impact Monitoring Assessment System (PIMAS)?

i. How was it developed?

ii. How does it function?

iii. What are the major components of the monitoring system?

iv. What is the frequency of impact monitoring?

v. How is the information collected collated and utilised?

vi. Is the data and information available for public scrutiny?

Impact

14. What have been the major achievements of the project?

15. What have been the major challenges to the implementation of the project in Thakurmunda? How were/are these overcome?

16. Are there any enhancements/expansions in the planning phase?

Community household survey questionnaire

Name: _____

Village: _____

Gender : Male/Female

1. What is your age?
   a. <18
   b. 18-25
   c. 26-40
   d. 41-60
   e. >60
2. What is your level of literacy?
   a. Illiterate
   b. Can read and write
   c. Primary Education (up to 5th)
   d. Secondary Education (up to 10th)
   e. Senior Secondary Education (up to 12th)
   f. Graduate
3. What is your occupation?
   a. Farmer
   b. Agricultural worker
   c. Labourer/NREGA Worker
   d. Self-employed
   e. Other_____
4. Please choose of the following that best describes your income status?
   a. BPL
   b. APL
5. Are you aware of Social Watch Group (SWG)?
   a. Yes
   b. No
6. If yes, what is the role of Social Watch Group?
   a. Budget analysis
   b. Budget expenditure tracking
   c. Enabling participatory tracking
   d. Use of Right to Information for transparency
7. Are you aware of the Rural Call Centre (RCC)?
   a. Yes
   b. No

8. If yes, how did you become aware of the RCC?
   a. Friends/family
   b. Government officials
   c. TV/Newspaper
   d. Social Watch Group
   e. Others _____
9. How many times have you visited the RCC?
   a. 1 time
   b. 2 times
   c. 3-5 times
   d. More than 5 times
10. What is the role of RCC?
    a. Disseminating information on government schemes
    b. Facilitation of RTI applications and applications under other government schemes
    c. Linkage establishment : guiding community members to the relevant government officers
11. What information do you find most useful from RCC?
    a. NREGA scheme information
    b. Job card
    c. Job demand information
    d. Budget information
    e. Grievance redressal
    f. Others _____
12. Were you satisfied with the information provided by RCC?
    a. Yes
    b. No
13. Have you participated in any social audit exercise by the SWG?
    a. Yes
    b. No
14. Have you attended any travelling media workshops?
    a. Yes
    b. No
15. If yes, what did you learn from these workshops? _____
16. How have you benefitted by the social Watch Group's social accountability and governance project?

a. Guaranteed rights in MGNREGA

b. Checked corruption in MGNREGA

c. Involved your participation in implementation of MGNREGA

d. Initiated monitory mechanisms

e. Provided information from government, NGOs and other stakeholders

f. Other _____

17. Your overall awareness of your rights and entitlements under MGNREGS has increased.

a. Agree

b. No change

c. Disagree

18. The government is more transparent and accountable for its performance with regard to MGNREGS now.

a. Agree

b. No change

c. Disagree

PRI members/ MLAs - SAMBANDH

1. What is your involvement in the Social Watch Group for Social Accountability and Governance project?

2. Please elaborate on the functioning of the MIS register that is maintained at the local government level.

3. The programme has been in operation for approximately two years now. What is your opinion regarding awareness about the programme among community members? Do you think there is a need for more awareness generation and training?

   i. If yes, why? How do you think it should be carried out?

   ii. If no, why not?

4. Do you think that the Social Watch Group and the Social Watch Centre are appropriate strategies for the purpose of ensuring transparency and accountability in MGNREGS implementation?

5. What are the biggest changes you have seen in the past year in terms of:

   i. Community members' awareness of MGNREGS and their entitlements

ii. Workers' involvement in the monitoring process - participation in social audits, community score cards etc.

iii. Creation of local assets

iv. Processing of job demands

v. Grievance redressal

6. Has the project established a clear process flow between the community and the panchayat administration?

7. How far has the project succeeded in:

   i. Tackling corruption in provision of jobs, payment of wages etc

   ii. Increasing transparency in the implementation of MGNREGS

   iii. Increasing administrative accountability to the citizens

8. From the government's perspective, what have been the major challenges to the project thus far?

   i. Have these been overcome? How?

   ii. If not, how do you propose to deal with them?

9. In your opinion, what are the major factors that have contributed to the project's success?

10. Do you recommend any changes for better implementation of the project?

Media representatives - SAMBANDH

1. What is your contribution in the Social Watch Group for Social Accountability and Governance project?

2. What methods were employed to spread awareness among community members about their rights and entitlements under MGNREGS?

   i. What is implied by travelling media workshops? How are they conducted?

   ii. What has been the impact of these workshops?

3. How many awareness campaigns have you organised thus far?

4. What, in your opinion, have been the major achievements of the project? Please answer this with relation to:

   i. Awareness among community members

   ii. Job demand under MGNREGS

   iii. Fairness and timeliness in wage payments

iv. Grievance redressal

v. Participation of the community members in the SWG, SWC, social audits etc

vi. Participation of women in particular

5. What have been the major challenges in creating awareness among community members?

6. In which other ways can the media contribute to the project?

7. Do you have any recommendations for better implementation of the project?

CASE STUDY 9

Enabling Community Monitoring of Rural Roads Project

Introduction

The poor condition of roads in rural India restricts access of villagers to schools, hospitals and employment and thereby hampers human development. To address this issue the Ministry of Rural Development flagged off the *Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana* (PMGSY) in 2005. Sixty per cent of the cost of building roads under PMGSY is picked up by the Centre and the rest by state governments. The scheme mandates state nodal agencies and implementing bodies to monitor and evaluate the projects end-to-end, from bidding and construction to maintenance and quality control.

But like most large social welfare programmes, the PMGSY is hobbled by corruption and fraud. The story is familiar. Owing to inadequate information, administrative accountability is

Intervention	Citizen Monitoring
Location	Odisha
Organisation	Youth for Social Development
Sector	Rural road construction under PMGSY scheme
Target	Rural
Audience	households
Geographic	Two blocks of
Scope	Gajapati District

near-zero as a result of which basic public services remain outside the reach of villagers. This also undermines the positive impact of other government schemes like the National Rural Health Mission and *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*. Against this background, Youth for Social Development (YSD), a not-for-profit independent social research and development organisation in Odisha, initiated a project named Enabling Community Monitoring of Rural Roads (ECMRR) to improve roads in the remotest blocks of Gajapati district, Raigada and Gosani, in partnership with local communities, particularly their young members.

YSD combined its participatory approach with social accountability tools such as Right to Information (RTI), citizen reporting, citizen monitoring and procurement monitoring as it believed that success will depend upon empowering and involving local communities and arming them with effective measurement tools.

Citizen monitors form the backbone of this initiative. To date, a total of 32 members have been trained as monitors and 18 out of 20 roads (six in Gosani and 12 in Raigada) have been brought under their purview. The remaining two will also soon be brought under the purview of the citizen monitors. Road connectivity and quality have already improved and citizen information boards carrying all technical and financial details of the projects have come up at most places. YSD has empowered citizens with knowledge and by engaging them in governance and anti-corruption initiatives. An empowered public displays greater involvement and responsiveness to public policies, demands improved services, which in turn, influence outcomes. YSD has introduced and built accountability mechanisms in Gajapati by creating platforms for the community to have a dialogue with government functionaries and act as reformers and decision-makers rather than passive consumers.

Context

Odisha's Gajapati district is an extremely poor district inhabited largely by tribal groups. It has a population of 575,880 and literacy of 54.29 per cent, according to census 2011. Though the

number of primary schools, colleges, and hospitals has risen of late, it has not benefited the people significantly as most of them remain inaccessible on account of poor roads.

Fig 1: Map of Gajapati district, Odisha
Source: National Informatics Centre, Government of India

The PMGSY[1] is a centrally sponsored scheme to provide all-weather connectivity in rural areas of the country. It aims to connect all habitations of over 500 people in the plains and of over 250 people in hill states, tribal and desert areas. Implemented well, PMGSY could change the face of connectivity to basic services across rural India. However, in Gajapati, the scheme is in a sorry state, riddled by corruption and lack of accountability. Hardly any road in this district has been completed within the stipulated 9-12-month time frame and the quality of construction is poor. Moreover, information about the roads is either not displayed at all on the display boards or is inaccurate. Not even once have discussions been held at the *gram sabha* level before the start of construction as mandated by the PMGSY guidelines. (A *gram sabha* is an assembly of village adults mandated by the Rural Self Governance Law called the Panchayati Raj Act). The administrative accountability of Odisha State Rural Road Agency (OSSRA) and National Rural Roads Development Agency (NRRDA) to the citizens the state has been unsatisfactory.

Also, the awareness among the people of the district about PMGSY is abysmally low because of which they suffer deprivation of essential public services in silence and are unable to

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1. Government of India. Ministry of Rural Development. Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana. Web. 11 April, 2012. < http://pmgsy.nic.in/>.

demand accountability from the government on construction of rural roads. Ignorance of the Right to Information (RTI) further cripples their ability to seek information from government on road infrastructure, construction, maintenance and the various sub processes involved.

The ECMRR project started by YSD in February 2011 aims to (i) enable the community to monitor PMGSY roads by disseminating and demystifying information on the bidding process, (ii) develop and pilot instruments that enable the community to monitor the process and ensure adherence to quality standards specified for PMGSY roads, and (iii) identify a reform and advocacy agenda for a transparent and accountable bidding process.

The Rayagada and Gosani blocks of the Gajapati district were selected for the project based on data from OSRRA on the status of ongoing road projects in the district: The construction of 20 of the 72 roads in the district was running more than five years behind schedule and these 20 roads were in these two blocks. Moreover, these were the poorest and most backward blocks.

Social Accountability Process

To ensure strict adherence of government agencies to PMGSY guidelines and transparency in the conduct of operations, YSD implemented the following three-pronged strategy:

- Spreading awareness among citizens on scheme guidelines
- Train them as monitors and to demand information from government officials using RTI
- Infuse leadership qualities among citizen monitors to monitor rural roads as per PMGSY guidelines and communicate the same to rest of the community members.

To ensure citizen participation, many social accountability tools were deployed. The choice and development of tools was based on surveys carried out by YSD in Berhampur, Rayagada and Gosani to capture the experiences, grievances and capacities of community members.

Citizen Monitors

- Ground monitoring of ongoing roads
- Filing RTI applications on behalf of citizens
- Facilitation between citizens and *panchayat*
- Conduct of social audit

Community member

- Participation in SAc processes-village meetings, community scorecard, social audit

Community based organisations

- Participation in training on RTI and SAc
- Potential involvement in advocacy initiatives

Youth for Social Development

- Design and implementation
- Facilitation between providers
- Monitoring of project

OSRRA and NRRDA

- Provision of information on state roads, PMGSY guidelines, bidding process
- Building credibility of project with government organisations at grassroots level

PRI members
• Facilitation between community and YSD • Building credibility of project among citizens • RTI filing for status of roads in their *panchayat*

Figure 2: Comprehensive inclusion of stakeholders has led to the development of an effective project implementation strategy by YSD.

YSD developed two kinds of tools inventories for ongoing and completed roads respectively. Their components are explained in the following steps:

Implementation strategy

YSD applied a three-fold strategy for project implementation.

- Organisation of village-level meetings and campaigns to raise community awareness about PMGSY and other government schemes.
- Conduct of RTI training workshops to equip citizen monitors and community to demand public information from government officials
- Training of citizen monitors to monitor the construction of ongoing roads and rank them as per PMGSY guidelines

YSD conducted awareness programmes and general meetings to sensitise the community on PMGSY-guidelines, components, and the scope of monitoring to help in tracking corruption in road construction. Community members were also prepped on their rights and entitlements as tax payers, including information from government officials.

Second, YSD's staff tutored the villagers about PMGSY and RTI, using easy to understand tools like charts. They were then asked to file sample RTI forms for information from government officials. The training stressed important points for eliciting response from officials like framing the questions correctly. More than 250 RTI applications were filed with YSD's support. These are on record and being followed up.

Third, YSD trained them on RTI and other social accountability tools like social audit. It picked young, eager and educated community members as citizen monitors to spread awareness on PMGSY and RTI to the rest of the community and monitor ongoing roads in 30 villages. Training citizen monitors was also part of the enabling community monitoring process. Currently, 32 citizen monitors have been trained by YSD and deployed to monitor 20 roads in 30 villages.

- Citizen report card to collect feedback on citizens' access to services, quality of road services, satisfaction with public service delivery, corruption among and response from public officials
- Procurement monitoring to monitor the entire pre-bidding process - call for tender to selection of a particular bidder for road construction
- Citizen monitoring (observation of roads) and social auditing (compilation of the agreed actual by the contractor and verification on the field) implemented through use of technical tools to measure roads and ensure good quality of road construction
- Public hearing to enable interface between the beneficiaries and the service providers

Figure 3: The tool kit used by citizen monitors for monitoring road construction has been developed by YSD. It consists of the basic instruments required to check whether the material used and the construction carried out meets the criteria prescribed for construction of rural roads under the PMGSY.

Monitoring under the project

Pre-biddig
- Comprehensive checklist developed to monitor if the bidding process has adhered to the prescribed guidelines
- Campaigns for awareness generation among community members

Post-bidding

Completed roads
- Observation of number and quality of culverts, bridges, traffic signals, and display boards.

Ongoing roads
- Selection of 100 m stretches of road
- Basis observation to check the thickness, width, length of road and materials used, surface bleeding etc.
- Checking the details of the project on information board
- Monitoring of different layers of road: embankment, granular and subway, WBM 2 and 3, premix carpet

Figure 4: Involvement of YSD in monitoring of the PMGSY is largely at the post bidding stage, particularly in the ongoing road construction projects.

Figure 8: A broken PMGSY information board, Rayagada block, Gajapati, reflects gross violation of PMGSY guidelines that require the contractors to clearly display detailed information about the start and end dates, budget allocation, length and other relevant details of the road being constructed.

Figure 9: Information displayed in English makes the board irrelevant for the local population.

Lack of identity authorisation documents for citizen monitors

After thorough training, citizen monitors are required to work on the field to check the status of roads through every phase of construction by directly interacting with contractors, workers and government officials. However, lack of proper identity cards prevents citizen monitors from approaching any of them with enquiries and complaints. Provision of identity cards requires approval of government officials who are not always forthcoming.

To overcome such challenges, YSD has involved road management officials at various levels of administration for their support, as a result of which circulars were sent by NRRDA to implementers such as chief engineers and sub divisional officers to cooperate with them and with communities monitoring PMGSY.

Lessons Learned

Contextually relevant approach ensures inclusiveness

Before YSD drew communities into the process of monitoring road projects in Gajapati, it was already involved in similar work in Bolangir with PAC. Moved by media reports that highlighted issues plaguing roads in the region, ranging from poor accessibility and connectivity to ignorance and near-zero participation of community in government schemes, YSD initiated this project. It drew on its expertise of road monitoring and understanding of core issues in the local context and applied social accountability tools to engage the community in government processes. Finally, it applied citizens' feedback to make the project inclusive and participatory.

Building local leadership is critical to project sustainability

Instead of deploying trained staff to monitor rural roads, YSD has equipped rural youth for the job by training them on social accountability tools, road monitoring instruments, RTI and government schemes. The training ensures that this group of citizen monitors can continue to monitor the roads on its own even after YSD's exit. Since the instruments require minimal maintenance and resources for upkeep, the villagers are comfortable with using them independently. Further, the youth can use the technical training for pursuit of other professions as well. Fifty three per cent of the community members surveyed felt that they were empowered enough to participate in road projects and acknowledged YSD's efforts.

Creating partnerships for development

YSD received training in monitoring inventories from PAC and further developed its own road model after understanding the local context, challenges and strengths. It also involved interested NGOs with similar expertise and experience on road monitoring projects in its program and utilised their networks during training, awareness-building and leadership management of citizen monitors. Finally, YSD involved *panchayat* samiti members to play the role of facilitators in the social accountability process with the beneficiaries. *Panchayat* members supported beneficiaries in writing RTI applications collectively and within the span of one year, 251 applications had been filed and responded to by government officials.

Potential for Scale-Up

As of now, YSD has implemented the project in two blocks of Gajapati district. With the use of social accountability tools, a participatory approach, community's involvement, and a thorough understanding of local context, it is possible to replicate this project in other areas with poor road connectivity in Odisha and other states. The fact that the project is not based on a particular social context would help its adaptability. YSD itself aims to expand it to districts of Bolangir and Kalahandi by July 2012.

A similar project approach can also be adopted for other government schemes like Public Distribution System, *Indira Awas Yojana*, National Rural Health Mission, *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* and such like to enhance transparency and accountability in planning, implementation and monitoring. Similarly, awareness of government programs can be created by organising meetings in villages, training community members on RTI and also tracking service delivery based on stipulated guidelines with citizens' participation.

Leveraging SMS based mobile monitoring technology

The road monitoring process enables citizen to ensure quality construction as per PMGSY guidelines. However, a sound reporting strategy is needed to evaluate the performance, quantify targets achieved and validate whether actions were carried out as planned. Quality reporting will help relay information from citizen monitors to YSD staff and to government officials.

At present, YSD follows a manual ranking system based on PMGSY guidelines in which monitors scores on each stage of road construction based on their general observation and using instruments. The scores are transferred to an Excel sheet for record and further analysis. However, to avoid delays on reporting multiple road projects, follow uniformity in reporting formats and ensure 100% reporting compliance, YSD can leverage on mobile technology to collect data, collate them and produce reports in a timely manner.

For this purpose, the parameters for ranking each stage of road construction can be listed in the mobile application, each entry accompanied by a box for entering the scores. Citizen monitors' mobile phones can be registered with their corresponding names, designation and block details for identification of SMS submissions. Based on their observation on field, they could send the SMS to a mobile number through which all messages go to a central server, which stores all information from which SMS data can be processed and uploaded to an online database.

ANNEX

Annex 1: About The Implementing Organisation

Youth for Social Development (YSD) is a not-for-profit independent social research and development organisation established in 2005, (registered under Societies Registration Act.1860) by a group of professionals devoted to improve the lives of the tribal, rural and urban poor in Orissa. YSD undertakes research, public education, capacity building, documentation, dissemination, people centered advocacy and participatory development action. Sustainable livelihood promotion, influencing public policy & finance, improving democratic governance for the betterment of the people and the state, are the thrust areas of the organisation. Youth for Social Development is promoting governance which is participatory, is based on the rule of law and protects human rights, is consensus oriented, transparent, accountable, effective and efficient, responsive, equitable and inclusive. This assures that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making. It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society.

Annex 2A: Interview Questionnaire

Background- Stakeholders and roles
1. What was the exact date of the commencement of the project?
2. The project is implemented in three blocks of Ganjam and Gajapati district. What were the selection criteria for identifying these districts/blocks?
3. According to our research, there are 7 stakeholders in this project. What are their specific roles in the project?
    a) Youth for Social Development (YSD)
    b) Odisha State Rural Road Agency (OSSRA)
    c) National Rural Roads Development Agency (NRRDA)
    d) *Panchayat* officials - Ganjam and Ganapati
    e) Citizen Monitoring and Audit Teams (CMAT)
    f) Public Affairs Centre, Bangalore
    g) Community members
    i. Are there any other stakeholders? If yes, please provide details on their roles and responsibilities in the project.

Implementation Strategy
4. YSD engages community in monitoring road construction process by using monitoring tools and by enabling them to use Right to Information Act to access information from government departments.
    i. What was the extent of the community's engagement with PMGSY monitoring prior to this project?
    ii. What are the exact social accountability tools currently being utilised in this project?
    iii. Why are these considered the best suited tools in this situation?
5. What is a procurement monitoring checklist and what are the components of the checklist?
6. YSD prepared road monitoring inventories to train citizen monitors on monitoring different components on rural roads in consultation with Public Affairs Centre, Bangalore. Please describe the monitoring tools.

7. According to our background study, YSD has three main objectives in this project. What activities/strategies are you following to realise each of these?

    - Enabling community monitoring of PMGSY roads through dissemination and demystification of information on bidding process

    - Developing and piloting a set of instruments for community monitoring of bidding process and adherence to quality specifications of PMGSY roads

    - To identify reform and advocacy agenda for transparent and accountable bidding process to improve the quality of rural roads

8. YSD approached the state rural development department, National Rural Roads Development Agency (NRRDA) and the Odisha State Rural Road Agency (OSSRA) to build rapport, bring interest to the program and collect information on road projects. What was the administrative accountability of these state agencies before YSD's intervention?
9. Community members are organised into groups and encouraged to participate in meetings/workshops to discuss road projects and participate in the bidding process. What kind of training was imparted to these community groups?
    i. Please provide details of the training sessions - resource persons, exact content, methodology, duration, following up mechanisms.
    ii. How has the community responded to this project? How were the people motivated to attend training/workshops?
    iii. How has the local government (*Panchayat* members and *sarpanch*) offered their support in mobilising the community members in this project? To what extent have they participated in this project?

Participation level
10. In the YSD quarterly reports, we learned that the level of awareness on PMGSY and RTI remains very poor. The awareness level on PMGSY is 32.5% in Ganjam and

33.6% in Gajapati. The awareness level on RTI is 4.3% in Gajapati and 6.3% in Ganjam. 14.5% know about various provisions of PMGSY and 2.2% know about competitive bidding process in PMGSY roads construction. However, 75% express their interest to become a citizen monitor in road construction.

i. Why is road construction activity a top priority to monitor amongst the community members?

11. What is the level of awareness (regarding RTI, knowledge on monitoring process) amongst the community groups at present? To what extent have they been empowered in this project?

12. Prior to the implementation of the project, how did the community submit an RTI request for PMGSY related information and procurement process?

Challenges

13. According to our background research, information on procurement from the government department gets delayed due to non-cooperation from implementing staff despite the existence of RTI law. What strategy did YSD adopt to overcome this challenge?

14. Our research indicates that few communities did not cooperate due to lack of time and direct benefits. How did YSD motivate them to participate in this social accountability practice?

15. Were there any challenges faced by YSD in disseminating information on road construction and guiding people to file RTI requests during the training/workshops? If yes, what were they and how were they overcome?

Impact

16. How many community members actively participate in the meeting proceedings?

17. During training, the community members are taught to file RTI application requests on road issues. How many total applications have been filed and to what extent is it demand driven?

18. PMGSY was targeted as there were major problems in the construction of roads such as unavailability of local construction

materials, cost over-run, poor response of contractors and over burden due to lack of staff to monitor. To what extent has YSD managed to overcome these shortcomings through this social accountability practice?

19. Has there been any improvement in service delivery after implementation of this project. If yes, please share the details. If not, they why not?

Citizen Monitors

1. How many citizen monitors are there in total?

2. As a citizen monitor, what is your role in promoting and using RTI in villages?

3. What motivated you to become a citizen monitor?

4. Do you find the trainings/workshops useful? Is there anything you feel must be integrated in this social accountability practice to make it more effective?

5. How has the government responded to the RTI applications submitted? Are you satisfied with the response? If yes, why? If no, why not?

6. Do you see an improvement in the service delivery post implementation of the project?

7. Do you face any challenges in motivating the rest of the community in attending meetings/workshops? If yes, then how did you convince them?

Annex 2B: Survey For Households - YSD

Name: _____ Village: _____

Gender: Male / Female

1. What is your age?
   a. <18
   b. 18 - 25
   c. 26 - 40
   d. 41 - 60
   e. > 60

2. What is your level of education?
   a. Illiterate
   b. Can read and write
   c. Primary education (upto 5th standard)
   d. Secondary education (upto 10th standard)
   e. Senior Secondary (upto 12th)
   f. Graduate

3. What is your occupation?
   a. Farmer/Agricultural worker
   b. Industrial worker
   c. Self-employed/Business
   d. Other_____
4. What problems were faced by the community prior to YSD's intervention?
   a. Lack of commutable roads
   b. Corruption in the process
   c. No citizen participation in government schemes
   d. No transparency in different stages of the work
5. How did you learn about PMGSY project of GOI?
   a. Newspaper
   b. Television
   c. Radio
   d. Government official
   e. I
   f. YSD
   g. Other _____
6. Have you attended any of the YSD community meetings?
   a. Yes
   b. No
7. If yes, how many meetings have you attended?
   a. 1-2
   b. 3-4
   c. > 4
8. What has been your role in the meeting?
   a. Activist
   b. Facilitator
   c. Learner
   d. Other_____
9. What did you find the most useful in the meeting?
   a. Information on PMGSY and other government programs
   b. Information on RTI and its usage to demand for information
   c. Direct meeting with field staff
   d. Other _____
10. Are you aware of the bidding process in PMGSY?
    a. Yes
    b. No
11. If yes, what does the process involve?
    a. Invitation of the bidder
    b. Tendering process
    c. Evaluation of bids
    d. Placing of signboards
    e. All of the above

12. Are you aware of the monitoring process of rural roads' quality?
    a. Yes
    b. No
13. If yes, what does the process involve?
    a. Checking various size of stones used on the PMGSY roads by the square ring
    b. Checking the locally available stones and the quality used
    c. Use dip-stick to check the thickness of the WMB and tarred roads
    d. Use measuring tap to measure the thickness of earth work
    e. Checking compaction of water content
    f. All of the above
14. Do you feel knowledge on bidding process and monitoring of quality rural roads has made PMGSY implementation more transparent?
    a. Strongly agree
    b. Agree
    c. Neither agree or disagree
    d. Disagree
    e. Strongly disagree
15. If no, is there any other factor that needs to be addressed?
    ----
16. Have you filed an RTI application?
    a. Yes
    b. No
17. How did you file the application?
    a. Own
    b. Citizen monitor
    c. Panchayat
    d. YSD staff
    e. Other _____
18. How has the government responded to the application?
    a. Mailed a response
    b. Visited the village
    c. Rectified the problem
    d. In the process of addressing the problem
    e. Other _____
19. Are you satisfied with the government's response?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Can't Say
21. As an individual, you feel empowered to participate in the bidding process of the road projects.

Annexure C: General Observation of Rural Roads (As Part of Citizen Monitoring Framework) By Citizen Monitors

S.l	District	Block	Name of the Road	Package No	Basic Observations
1	Gajapati	Rayagada	P.W.D Road at Gudda to Tarabsing	OR-10-08	• Surface bleeding is visible at many places. • Road construction work at different places in different stages (i.e. Granular sub base, WBM-II) are going on • The construction work is very slow process
2	Gajapati	Gosani	R.D Road at P.K.D Block to Jaganathapur	OR-10-44	• Citizen informative board has broken • There is a tree in the middle of the road
3	Gajapati	Gosani	RD Road to Singpur	OR-10-47	• There are surface bleeding on the road • Trees are present on the road • No informative board at the other end of the road
4	Gajapati	Gosani	PWD Road to Totagumuda	OR-10-47	• Medium size stones lying at the sides of the road • There are big size wood log lying both the sides of the road • Three electricity poll present on the road • Many surface undulations are visible on the road
5	Gajapati	Gosani	PWD Road to Bomika	OR-10-31	• Electric polls lying on the road. • Surface undulations are clearly visible on the road. • Branches of the trees are hanging from both the sides of the road • Crack-marks are there on the road.
6	Gajapati	Gosani	Machamara to Lingipur	OR-10-55A	• Extreme delay in completion of road work • There are so many surfaces bleeding found
7	Gajapati	Rayagada	PWD Road to Burakhatapass	OR-10-35A	• 2.5K.M onwards work is in Granular sub base • Soil is not adequately compacted • The informative board at other end of the road has broken • There are four trees between 1.950K.M to 2.00K.M. on the road • No culvert at appropriate places. • At many places surface bleeding is visible on the road. • Roller work is not properly done. • Crack marks are there at the edges of the road. • Drain work not properly done.

8	Gajapati	Rayagada	Kainpur to Burukhatpass	OR-10-35B	• No drainage system on both the sides of the road. • Crack mark on the road. • Big size stones and trees are present on the middle of the road. • At many places surface undulation are visible. • The informative board at the beginning of the road has broken.
9	Gajapati	Rayagada	Mandalsahi to Burusing	OR-10-56	• From the beginning up to 350 meter road is full of surface bleeding. • At some places hip of big stones are there. • No mud fill up to the sides of cc road • No side wall at some places. • No boundary stone at all. • At every 50m interval, there is k.m. stone available.
10	Gajapati	Rayagada	Ziranga to Abasing	OR-10-34	• There is electric poll on the middle of the road. • Surface undulation is visible on the road. • At many places surface bleeding is visible. • Between 1550 to 1800m, no metal work done. • No 06 culvert has completely damaged. • No drain work done on both side of the road. • No informative board on the other end of the road. • No cc road work done.
11	Gajapati	Rayagada	P.W.D Road to Kikising	OR-10-32A	• Drain work is not properly done. • There is roller mark on the road. • Edges of the road damaged. • Soil is not adequately compacted. • At many places surface undulation is visible. • Surface bleeding is also there. • No informative board at the other end of the road. • In entire road the work is in embankment, WBM-II, WBM-III stages at one place or other. • There are two more culverts and length of cc road is also more as per the informative board.
12	Gajapati	Rayagada	Burakhatapass to Ganjam Border	OR-10-90	• 0.00K.M. to 3.5K.M road work is in formation stage. • No work afterwards

Annexure D: Ranking System of On-Going Roads Based on PMGSY Guidelines

Block	Name of the Road	Package No	Right of Way Width (in metre)	Formation Width (in metre)	Carriage Width (in meter)	Current work-stage	Sand	Soil	Gel	Cement	Big Size Stones	Medium Size Stones	Small Size Stones
Rayagada	P.W.D Road at Gudda to Tarabsing	OR-10-08	8.6	6.4	3	WBM-II	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gosani	R.D Road at P.K.D Block to Jaganathapur	OR-10-44	9	7.2	3.1	WBM-II							
Gosani	RD Road to Singpur	OR-10-47	9.6	9	3.75	WBM-II	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes
Gosani	PWD Road to Totagumuda	OR-10-47	9.5	7	3.5	WBM-II		Yes	Yes				
Gosani	PWD Road to Bomika	OR-10-31	9.3	7.5	3.4	For/Emabn kment	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes
Gosani	Machamara to Lingipur	OR-10-55A	9.8	8.3	3.7	WBM II	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	
Rayagada	PWD Road to Burakhatapass	OR-10-35A	7.4	7.17	2.8	WBM-II	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	
Rayagada	Kainpur to Burukhatpass	OR-10-35B	9.8	8.4	3.2	For/Emabn kment							
Rayagada	Mandalsahi to Burusing	OR-10-56	9..60	8.4	3.2	WBM-II	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes
Rayagada	Ziranga to Abasing	OR-10-34	9.1	9	3.4	WBM-II		Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rayagada	P.W.D Road to Kikising	OR-10-32A	8.4	7.7	3.2	WBM-II	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rayagada	Burakhatapass to Ganjam Border	OR-10-90	10.4	9.1	3.3	Formation/ Emabnkment		Yes			Yes	Yes	

Annexure E: List of Ngos Supporting YSD

Sl #.	Name of the NGO and address with email ID	Chief Executive and Mobile No.	Invitation	Confirmation Status
1	Social Welfare for Weaker Sections (SWWS), Forest Office Road, Paralakhemundi,Dist:Gajapati	D.Jagganath Raju, President 094370 72197		
2	Community Care Development (CCD), Pathpatnam Road, Near check gate Paralakhemundi, Dist:Gajapati	A. Jagannath Raju, Secretary 09437062516		
3	SURAKSHA, New PWD colony, Parlakhemundi, Dist:Gajapati, 7612000, Ph.No: 06815-224723,	09861121164		
4	Jana Kalyan Pratistan (JKP), Sundi Street, Paralakhemundi, Dist:Gajapati 7612000, Ph.No:06815-223769, 222921	Director 09437012921		
5	Organisation Rural Development (ORD)Forest Office Road, Paralakhemundi, Dist:Gajapati	Secretary 09692242955 Ph.no: 06815-223930		
6	ASTHA, OM Shanti Colony, Parlakhemundi, Dist:Gajapati	Rajendra Panda, 09437216749, Ph.No: 06815-222024		
7	CURE, OM Shanti Colony, Paralakhemundi, Dist:Gajapati	Director: 09439418471 Ph.No: 06815-223472		
8	SERVE, Palace Street, Paralakhemundi, Dist:Gajapati	Ph.No: 06815-222326		
9	Mahila Vikas, Forest Office Road, Paralakhemundi,Dist:Gajapati	Sibani Panigrahi, Secretary , Ph.No: 09438338960		
10	PRAVA, Kumuti Street, Paralakhemundi, Dist:Gajapati	Ph.No: 06815-222638		
11	PRAJA, Near CT Training School, Paralakhemundi	Director 09437192514		
12	Nari Unnoyono Samtha, Telegu Sundhi Sahi, Paralakhemundi, 761200.	Secretary		
13	AWARE, Near D.F.O Office, Paralakhemundi, 761200.	Coordinator		
14	LSRA, Palace Street, Paralakhemundi.	Director		
15	PASS, A.Biswanath, Director, Forest Office Road, Paralakhemundi, Dist:Gajapati			

16	Gram Vikas, Near HP Gas office, Parlakhemundi	Coordinator		
17	LIFE, Head Post Office Lane, Paralakhemundi.	Secretary		
18	KMDS, Near Chilling Plant, Paralakhemundi	Managing Director		
19	Srujonika Juba Parishad, Bada Bramhin Street, Paralakhemundi, 761200	Secretary		

Affiliated Network for Social Accountability – South Asia Region (ANSA-SAR) housed within the Institute of Governance Studies (IGS), BRAC University was initiated in 2009 with a seed grant from the World Bank Institute. The primary objective of this network is to enhance and scale up social accountability initiatives in the South Asia; and create linkages and synergies between different actors and institutions to synergize and enhance efforts on the demand side of governance. Over the past years, ANSA has provided small grants for experimenting and scaling up micro-level social accountability initiatives by existing and emerging actors, especially civil society organizations that work at the grassroots; have conducted and supported research, development of knowledge products on specific social accountability and peer sharing and learning forums; and helped build capacities and competencies of civil society as well as public institutions through workshops, conference and peer-learning forums. Knowledge generation, assimilation and dissemination are thus part of ANSA SAR's core mandate.

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