MAPPING AS NETWORKING TOOL FOR SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY ADVOCACY

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"[T]he exercise of freedom is mediated by values, but the values in turn are influenced by public discussion and social interactions…"

Amartya Sen

Background

Social accountability, as citizens' direct engagement with government to check and monitor the use of public resources, has to define its niche among various voices and efforts in the development circle. It needs a vehicle to gather groups and individuals around its unique advocacy and valued principles and methods in promoting effective governance.

One such vehicle is networking. Through networking, institutions, organizations and individual players can join forces around a common issue (Creech/Willard, 2001:19), cited from Zee and Engel, 2004:5) and build relationships for sharing of knowledge, experiences and practices (Padron (1991), Plucknett (1990), Engel (1993), cited ibid.)

As exchanges and interactions characterize the dynamics of a network, information and communication shall be its main drivers, which can take advantage of the internet technology. For its enabler, the network can appeal to the members' sense of and need for connection, which highlights the strength in unity and solidarity in addressing issues. Its accelerator shall be the members' trust in the organization, which involves the structure, governance and set procedures for operation. By and large, networking facilitates the flow and relationship of information and knowledge to benefit the members. It creates an empowering atmosphere within the network, a value that should translate into stronger advocacy for social accountability.

One fundamental task of networking is understanding the environment where social accountability happens. This is achieved through continuous mapping and scanning, which provide up-to-date information that should be used to respond to network members' needs.

The succeeding sections explain aspects of the mapping and scanning of the social accountability environment.

Why is mapping important?

The mapping is important to take stock of existing social accountability methods and practices of target network members. It reveals their interests and capacities, issues and concerns, as well as agenda and directions for future undertakings. They form the basis of their interconnectedness and interdependence, their reason for coming together.

Likewise, the map shows the gaps and uncharted areas of the past and present endeavours combined together. It contributes to how the network can be improved.

What is being mapped?

The programs, projects, initiatives or efforts on or related to social accountability are the object of mapping. These should involve at least one of the following:

a. citizen-government interface
b. citizen participation in checking or monitoring government performance
c. citizen participation in checking the allocation and use of public resources.

Any program, project, initiative or effort with non-government participation that has at least one of the above features must be captured in the mapping. It may be initiated by the government, citizen organization, international donor institution or any player in the development community.

Who is being mapped?

The mapping covers all players from the sectors of government, non-government, civil society, community, academe, donors, among others. They are the subjects of mapping who implement or participate in implementing the social accountability projects or programs or initiatives. They may come from the national, local or grassroots levels.

The prescription is to be as comprehensive and as exhaustive as possible, based on the set parameters of the mapping. One must not discriminate against any kind of affiliation or sphere of influence. That can happen in the processing and analysis of the map generated by the mapping activity.

Where is mapping done?

Where does one go to know and meet the subjects and objects of mapping? Mapping starts with one's immediate circle of friends and relations. Events where they meet are good venues to gather information relevant to the mapping. These

can serve as springboard to more contacts and referrals. One can also organize events precisely for the purpose of doing the mapping exercise.

Another way is to go to the internet search engine and check out entries related to social accountability, e.g. civil society monitoring, government budget, participatory governance, anti-corruption, etc. There must, however, be caution in the use of dated information posted in the website.

When is mapping done?

As mentioned, mapping is a continuing activity. Any time could be an opportunity to know about something that can be included in the map. But, of course, at some point, one pauses and consolidates what has been gathered so far. A strategic time can also be set to do this.

How is mapping done?

Mapping can be done using a simple information management tool. It should be guided by a template that targets to capture only relevant information. It should be focused, but at the same time, flexible and open to modification.

See an example of that template below.

RECORD OF INDIVIDUAL PROFILE

Country	
Institution	
Type of Institution	
Type and Name of Initiative	
Year started	
Sector/s	
Reference Materials	
Narrative	

About the organization

Year established	
Donors	
Name of Head and Designation	
Office Address	
Telephone/Fax	
Email	
Website	