

# LEARNING IS JUST A CLICK AWAY



**Can you imagine** a classroom where there are no notebooks, no chairs and no tables, where the teachers are hundreds of miles from the students, where classmates are not in the same countries? It seems difficult to imagine but it is possible. In fact, the Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA-EAP) is implementing it already through their online learning programs.

This learning brief introduces ANSA-EAP's online learning program, one of the modalities being developed and used by ANSA EAP to build partner's capacities on social accountability. It will explain how the modality is put into practice, what programs have been realized and what lessons were taken from the process.

## INTRODUCING ONLINE LEARNING

Since 2008, the Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA-EAP) has been coming up with creative ways to teach communities how to engage constructively in affairs of the government. One strategy they have developed is the online learning program.

What is an online learning program? Simply put, it is a program or strategy that makes use of web-based learning approaches and other information and communication technologies (ICTs) to teach social accountability (SAc). This can include the use of something as simple as e-mail to the more complex discussion forums, video conferencing, online chats, blogging and the sharing of electronic files.

ANSA-EAP envisions competent and empowered communities who are dedicated and passionate about promoting capable, effective, and accountable governments through social accountability. But because development issues are so multi-faceted, there is a need to bring together groups of people from different countries, different educational backgrounds and different organizations into one network. Online learning broadens the reach of capacity building for social accountability. Cyberspace allows for a world with no differences and no boundaries, thus allowing more learners per organization, more organizations per region and infinitely more opportunities for learning.

The use of the internet and information and communication technologies (ICTs) has also allowed social accountability learning to happen closer to people's institutional contexts and fields of action, thus facilitating ANSA-EAP's agenda of integrating SAc approaches into the strategies and programs of their organizations.

Finally, online learning facilitates interaction and exchange among social accountability practitioners and experts across the region. It allows learners to build closer ties while maintaining focus on common interests like social accountability and good governance.

Like ANSA-EAP's other stratagems, online learning follows the learning-in-action cycle. It is combined with other modalities to facilitate iterative learning (thru action-reflection-action), mutual learning (between social accountability learning facilitators and learners, between social accountability experts and field practitioners), and peer learning (exchange in a community of practice).\*

Other modes that ANSA-EAP use are face-to-face, mentoring, coaching and exposure visits (MCEV), grant giving (to help piloting of SAc projects), learning by doing, and networking (learning by exchanging within a community of practitioners).



## IMPLEMENTING ONLINE LEARNING PROGRAMS

All of ANSA-EAP's online learning designs involve four basic processes:

1. Reviewing the learner's past actions;
2. Clarifying the learners' understanding of SAc;
3. Comparing and contrasting the learner's experience with others' SAc experiences;
4. And planning how to improve the learner's existing SAc practice.

\* refer to Learning-in-Action Learning Brief

The four processes are then customized into different programs by ANSA-EAP based on the needs of the learners. Programs can be as short as four- to eight-weeks or as long as several months to one year. It can cover basic social accountability topics such as introductions to good governance and social accountability to more complex and detailed case studies and organization-specific problems.

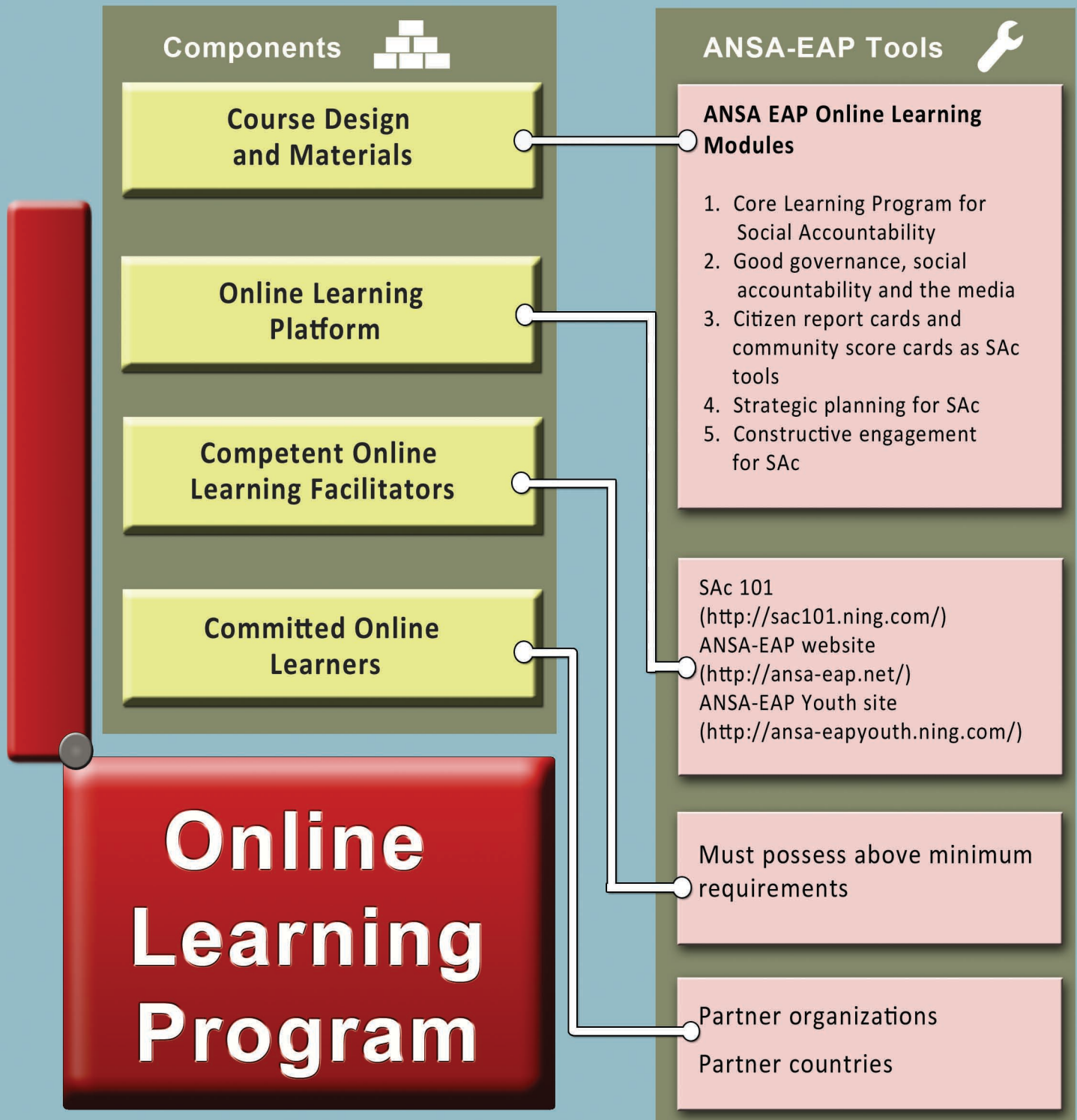


# The Toolbox: MAKING YOUR OWN SAc ONLINE LEARNING PROGRAM

Have you ever tried to imagine what makes a successful SAc online learning program? Is it just a bunch of ingredients placed in a pot mixed together and served? Or does it require a more thoughtful assessment? Based on the experience of ANSA-EAP and other groups, quality online learning programs require certain elements.

Each online learning program always begins with the design of courses which are then shared through specific online learning platforms. Then, these platforms and courses are presented by competent online learning facilitators to their learners or participants."

Just like everything in a toolbox though, each component must meet certain standards to produce effective and quality learning. This is also where minimum competencies and benchmarks come in. Every component must have their own sets of standards.







## Standards Checklist

### Course Design and Materials

#### **Course Syllabus and Outlines**

- ❑ Set clear learning objectives and outcomes that take into account the online learners' needs, e-learning mode and Blooms' taxonomy of learning objectives
- ❑ Provide learning activities that help students achieve the course objectives, optimize the advantages of e-learning (more project-based or grounded learning, exchange among a diverse group of practitioners spread over a wider geographical area, option for asynchronous discussions, etc.), and take into account the learning-in-action cycle
- ❑ Include effective processes to assess learning results based on the course objectives and utilizing appropriate electronic technologies

#### **Learning Materials**

- ❑ Support learning objectives and enhance learning process
- ❑ Accessible even to online learners with slow internet connections
- ❑ Include clear instructions and be presented in a logical, organized manner

#### **Guidelines regarding minimum standards for course development, design and delivery**

#### **Activity Design**

### Online Learning Platform

#### **Course Syllabus and Outlines**

- ❑ Provide simple, well-organized and easily navigable layout and interface that facilitates exploration and learning
- ❑ Facilitate in-depth online interaction and feedback-giving among learners and online learning facilitators, including documentation or archiving supports (e.g., it should allow saving, copying, dissemination of chat transcripts for learning assessments)
- ❑ Allow hosting and use of multimedia materials, including videos, audio files, presentations, photos, text documents, PDF files, etc., that could enhance the online learning experience
- ❑ Provide easy to use and accessible online learning management features for course designers and learning facilitators (e.g., uploading learning materials, notifying learners on recent activities, defining and approving membership in group discussions, designing online learning assessments, etc.)
- ❑ Allow full functionality with minimum technology (standard computer, webcam, headset/microphone, good internet connection) on the part of learners
- ❑ Internet access
- ❑ Technological support/ troubleshooting
- ❑ Minimum technology: webcam, speed of computer, speed of internet, microphone, headset etc.

### Competent Online Learning Facilitators

#### **Course Syllabus and Outlines**

- ❑ Expertise on subject matter
- ❑ Ability to translate learning materials and ideas into plain English
- ❑ Ability to design an effective syllabus or learning design – with clear objectives, expected outputs, schedule
- ❑ Ability to network the participants with variety of learning resources like online materials, resource persons, mentors etc.
- ❑ Ability to focus not only on content but on creating a sense of community
- ❑ Ability to foster sense of learner centeredness in the whole learning process

### Committed Online Learners

#### **Self-motivated**

- ❑ Able to translate the course objectives into personal learning goals based on their own work or contexts
- ❑ Able to manage their time well to allot definite blocks for online learning
- ❑ Able to go beyond possible constraints of course design and online learning mode to complement or enhance the online learning process (e.g., initiative to find other available learning materials and share these online)

#### **Access to minimum technological requirements for e-learning**

#### **Can breach the language barrier (if any)**

#### **Sufficient technical knowledge**

#### **Support of learners' organizations or employers to the online learning process**

- ❑ allows learners to access internet during office hours
- ❑ allows integration of learning activities or projects in learners' program of work
- ❑ provides financial or technical support

# Social Accountability and Media

<b>Objective:</b>	Discuss the role and use of media – particularly television and radio – in promoting social accountability and good governance
<b>Online modes used:</b>	E-mail, file-sharing, discussion forums, online chats
<b>Non-online modes used:</b>	Grant giving (to help pilot SAc projects), face-to-face workshop on social accountability and good governance
<b>Platform used:</b>	<a href="http://sac101.ning.com">http://sac101.ning.com</a>
<b>Topics discussed:</b>	Social accountability tools, principles, and approaches of transparency, accountability, and participation in radio programming content and strategies
<b>Length of the engagement:</b>	One month
<b>Target group:</b>	Kendari TV, Radio Swara Alam and Yayasan Cinta Alam

Kendari TV and Radio Swara Alam are media outfits founded and established by the environmental organization, the Yayasan Cinta Alam (YASCITA) or Association for the Love of Nature. Both are based in Kendari City, Southeast Sulawesi in East Indonesia. Kendari TV is the only independent community-based TV station now operating in Kendari City. Radio Swara Alam, on the other hand, broadcasts on FM and features regular environmental, news and public affairs programs, apart from music and other youth-oriented shows on air.

In 2009, ANSA-EAP provided a small grant to YASCITA for Radio Swara Alam and Kendari TV to develop radio and TV programs on social accountability. They also provided technical support, in the form of learning and mentoring activities to orient them on the SAc approach and guide them in developing the proposed media programs.

According to A’o Dode, the Executive Director of Radio Swara Alam and a member of Yayasan Cinta Alam (YASCITA), ANSA-EAP has been really helpful in facilitating the achievement of the organization’s goals and visions. “We have integrated the tools, principles, and approaches of transparency, accountability, and participation in our programming content and strategies. Looking back, we used to design and implement our plans internally. Today, however, our programs are designed to consider and include various stakeholders –citizens, local government, private sector,” he said.

Through the step-by-step and online learning process of ANSA-EAP, they were able to bring the management of Kendari TV and Radio Swara Alam to a better comprehension of social accountability and its role in their work.

The members of YASCITA currently follow up online discussions on topics by holding more comprehensive sharing sessions on the learning outputs. Each working unit whether they be in program production, marketing, newsroom or management participate in discussions.



## Mainstreaming SAc in Regional Change Strategies

<b>Objective:</b>	Mainstream social accountability in the strategies, structures, and systems of Oxfam Great Britain (OGB) East Asia while building the capacities of its country teams in designing and implementing social accountability projects on the ground
<b>Online modes used:</b>	e-mail, discussion forums, online chats and conferences, bloggers' corner, online mentoring/coaching while implementing SAc projects
<b>Non-online modes used:</b>	face-to-face workshops
<b>Platform used:</b>	<a href="http://sac101.ning.com">http://sac101.ning.com</a>
<b>Topics discussed:</b>	Grounding and understanding social accountability, public financial management (PFM) cycle, participatory planning and budgeting as SAc approaches, participatory expenditure tracking and performance monitoring, designing a social accountability program or strategy
<b>Length of the engagement:</b>	One year with three months for the online learning program (1 month for Core Learning Program and 2 months for the online mentoring )
<b>Target group:</b>	OGB Country Program Staff from Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam and Myanmar and OGB regional leads

Another online learning initiative by ANSA EAP was with Oxfam Great Britain.

Oxfam Great Britain (OGB) is an international development organization that partnered with ANSA-EAP in 2009. The partnership was aimed at integrating social accountability into OGB's change strategies and governance programs in country organizations in East Asia. Thirty to forty country program staff from five countries (Philippines, Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar) including the three regional change leads of the organization were involved in the program.

The formal online portion of the year-long program included a month-long introductory online course and a two-month online mentoring and coaching exchange designed to guide participants through their social accountability initiatives. This formal exchange was designed to facilitate in-country and cross-country learning so participants could have a better understanding of SAc and how they would adopt it in their own countries.

Informally, online mentors continued to support OGB participants in developing and implementing their initiatives throughout the year. They helped the participants connect with experts who could clarify project frameworks, address technical issues, and draw out lessons.

Most of the participants enjoyed the program. "It was so much fun and interesting to interact with most of the 'classmates' in this SAc 101 course," said Jing Pura, the OGB East Asia Regional Change Lead for Women's Economic Leadership.

Some have even started implementing programs they have learned. The Right to Be Heard Programme in Vietnam applied the four-pillar SAc framework into the design of a new project named: "Promoting Social Accountability at grassroots level in Bac Ai district, Ninh Thuan province". The project is aimed at enhancing the commitment and capacities of local authorities and local CSOs (Bac Ai Father Front-BAFF, CBOs) in interacting effectively towards more pro-poor and transparent programmes.

"The direction is quite clear already, yet big challenges remain like how to drive towards that direction and how to measure if we're on track. We've planned some capacity building activities for CSOs in policy monitoring, but we have yet to decide on which monitoring tools to use, and on how we can assist them in bringing the monitoring results to higher government levels," Vu Hoang Duong of OGB Vietnam's Right to Be Heard Program said.





## WBI Module on Participatory Performance Monitoring

<b>Objective:</b>	Facilitate appreciation of social audit, procurement monitoring and other participatory performance monitoring approaches as SAc tools among good governance stakeholders in Africa
<b>Online Modes Used:</b>	Video conferencing, discussion forums, file sharing
<b>Non-online modes used:</b>	Group discussions, country level orientations
<b>Platform used:</b>	World Bank's e-Institute for Development ( <a href="http://einstitute.worldbank.org/ei/">http://einstitute.worldbank.org/ei/</a> )
<b>Topics discussed:</b>	Social audit, procurement monitoring, other performance monitoring tools
<b>Length of the engagement:</b>	Three Weeks
<b>Target groups:</b>	Citizen groups' representatives and government officials in Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia

ANSA EAP also provides technical support to other agencies running their own learning programs on good governance and social accountability.

The World Bank Institute (WBI) is one of the channels for change of the financial and technical assistance organization, the World Bank Group. WBI designs and delivers learning programs that create opportunities for development stakeholders to acquire, share, and apply global and local knowledge and experiences. One program they launched was the World Bank Institute learning program on Accountable Governance via their link [einstitute.worldbank.org](http://einstitute.worldbank.org). This purely online program was aimed at teaching self-motivated learners about accountable governance including topics on social accountability theory, tools, and strategy.

WBI involves their partner institutions to deliver the Courses drawn from the learning program. The partner institutions then adapt and modify the material in order to best match

local context and learning needs. In July of 2011, the WBI requested the ANSA-EAP to facilitate part two of Module 4 in the World Bank's Core Learning Program. The module was on participatory performance monitoring (ppm), and part two covered social audit, procurement monitoring and other PPM tools.

According to Carolina Vaira of the World Bank Institute, ANSA-EAP was especially tapped for their knowledge and experience in working in the Philippines and Southeast Asia. In fact, one of the participants, Martha Kwataine from Malawi said "I really find your experience rich and rewarding. It is good to learn from how Philippines is doing it (programs on social accountability and Access to Information law)." She wished that she could implement the same programs shared by the ANSA-EAP facilitators under the module in her organization.



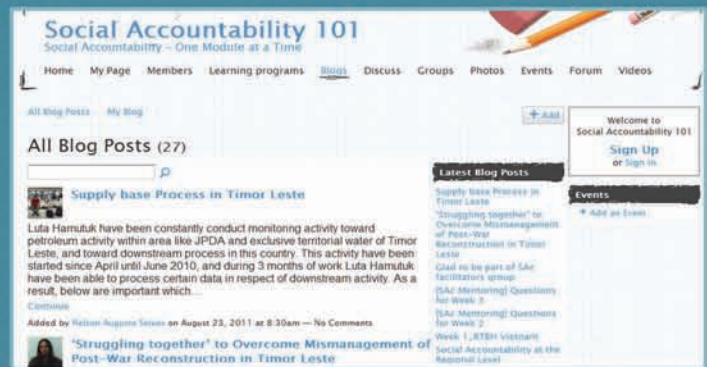
## THE HUB: THE ANSA –EAP SAC101.ning WEBSITE

Every student needs a venue for learning. In the case of ANSA-EAP learners, this virtual hub is the SAC101.ning website.

The SAC101.ning website or simply “Ning” (<http://sac101.ning.com/>) provides structured learning programs and modules that have been customized to the learning needs of each group of learners following the learning-in-action cycle. It is the virtual town center of the community where learners can meet and interact. It has three main pages: discussion forums, blogger’s corner and weekly chats.

Discussion forums are usually organized into learning groups. On this page, participants can post their outputs and comments on the week’s assignments. They can also respond to ideas and queries from learning facilitators or fellow learners.

Online chats are organized and carried out at the end of each week to tackle interesting points or emerging concerns from the discussion forums.



Finally, the bloggers’ corner provides a space for summarizing results from the weekly discussions and chats. Each learner can share their thoughts to other learning groups who are using the Ning platform and post further insights on the topics at hand.

Using the pages of Ning, one can learn how to promote social accountability as well as use social accountability tools to push for good governance.

Aside from Ning, there are two other platforms used by ANSA-EAP. These are the ANSA-EAP website (<http://ansa-eap.net/>) and the ANSA-EAP Youth site (<http://ansa-eapyouth.ning.com/>).

## IMPLEMENTING ONLINE LEARNING PROGRAMS

It is the hope of ANSA-EAP that their efforts in online learning will lead to the emergence of a dynamic online community of learners and SAC practitioners that will spearhead the efforts towards better governance and enhanced public accountability in the East Asia and Pacific region.

And indeed, it is apparent that online learning is an invaluable tool for teaching social accountability. It is more cost-effective and provides a wider reach at a shorter timeframe. Participants can “attend” the discussions wherever they are – whether they are in the office or conducting their programs and activities elsewhere.

Having a learner-driven program also enables participants to assess lessons based on their actual live experiences. The online chats also help in providing real-time communication among the participants.

The challenges of online learning, however, lie on the availability of the mentor and the reliability of the equipment used by the participants. Bandwidth restrictions or poor connection can disturb the discussions, especially during live chat sessions. This was especially experienced in priority countries like Cambodia and Mongolia where internet coverage is not that wide. Some ideas might also become lost in translation due to differences in language, experience and context between group members and their mentors. There could also be a delay in feedback from the mentor or students depending on the reliability of one’s internet connection and the time available for each session.

There is definitely a need for mentors to take time to familiarize themselves with the learners’ contexts and to translate lessons from their own experiences to that of the learners’.



Other insights from the past two years point towards possibilities for future program development.

#### **Distance learning programs on social accountability.**

Today, ANSA-EAP only uses online learning as part of its larger face-to-face programs. In the future, however, ANSA-EAP could offer more individual-oriented online learning programs or certificate courses on various topics related to good governance and social accountability. These programs will involve more structured course designs and will have individual learners from government and citizen groups enrolling online, going through the learning materials and activities with their co-learners, submitting assignments and learning outputs, interacting with facilitators through email or chat facilities, and eventually getting their certificates after fulfilling the course requirements.

**Packaging and developing online learning modules.** There is a need to further systematize and package ANSA EAP's existing online learning modules and come out with new ones based on emerging innovations and interesting areas of social accountability practice. Examples of the latter would include online learning modules on constructive government-citizen engagement, ICT and SAc, and social accountability in the extractive industries. Customized online learning modules could also be developed to: 1) cater to institutions who are interested in capacitating their members on SAc and in mainstreaming SAc in their work; and 2) provide online learning or mentoring support to complement other learning modalities or cull lessons from practice.

**Building capacities of network partners for online learning.** There is also a need to come out with online learning protocols – minimum requirements or guidelines – and materials in organizing and running online learning programs on social accountability and good governance.

These would include guides for assessing learning needs, orienting prospective participants on the learning process and technologies, setting up the online learning platform, implementing the program, and enhancing competencies for facilitating online learning. These protocols and materials will then have to be disseminated to network partners and SAc stakeholders.

**Sustaining the community of learners.** ANSA EAP's initial experiences in online learning point to the need for a dedicated overall program coordinator for online learning activities who implements the learning programs, follows up on resource persons, mentors and facilitators, and connects with participants to assess and continually improve the programs. Apart from ensuring relevant content and effective delivery of the programs, an important aspect of online learning coordination and facilitation involves building and sustaining a real sense of community among the online learners. This sense of community helps promote open exchange and grounded learning on social accountability.

**Organizing online learners.** It is easier to organize and initiate online discussions with groups that are already formed based on their institutional affiliations or geographical proximity. But it takes more planning to organize online discussions with learners spread across a country or an entire region since this requires the commitment of individuals. Apart from having a more structured design and an incentive system, a possible strategy in this set-up is to appoint point persons or conveners from among the participants who will work with their co-learners organized into learning team. Such conveners will take on facilitation support responsibilities (e.g. following up on learning assignments and organizing their learning teams for the real-time chats).

## **AFFILIATED NETWORK FOR SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**



### About ANSA-EAP

Launched in February 2008, ANSA-EAP is a regional network promoting the practice of social accountability by providing a common platform for exchange of information and experience and by providing capacity building opportunities and technical assistance to citizen groups and governments.

The Ateneo School of Government (ASoG), a unit of the Ateneo de Manila University, operationalizes and oversees the development of ANSA-EAP, which has start-up support from the World Bank.

For more information, visit <http://www.ansa-eap.net> or email Rande Cabaces, ANSA-EAP Learning and Capacity Building Coordinator at [rcabaces@ansa-eap.net](mailto:rcabaces@ansa-eap.net)

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