

Activity notes
Partners' project inception meetings
ANSA EAP-PTF-CAC MBC Enhancing Impact of
Citizen-Led Transparency Initiatives Project
Mangaldan, Abra, and Tabuk City, Philippines
18 and 20 February, 12 March 2013

Background and rationale

Building stakeholder support for partners' initiatives

- The Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF), the Coalition Against Corruption-Makati Business Club (CAC-MBC), and the Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA EAP) embarked on a two-year project aimed at building the capacities of citizen groups at the local level in sustaining transparency advocacies and citizen monitoring initiatives. The project involved partnering with networks of citizen groups in two (2) selected regions or provinces in the country, developing appropriate strategies in engaging with the local government, supporting citizen monitoring of local government performance, and sharing emerging knowledge on sustaining local social accountability and good governance efforts with other practitioners.
- Last 18 and 20 February, and 12 March 2013, the PTF Consortium joined the staff and partners of the Responsible Citizens, Empowered Communities In Solidarity for Social Change (RECITE), Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Governance (CCAGG), and Kalinga Apayao Religious Sector Association (KARSA) in their project inception workshops. Said workshop aimed to inform stakeholders about the partners' initiatives and their roles in the projects. The activity also provided a venue for assessing partners' engagement with the local government and identifying ways for improving such relationship.

Proposed workshop objectives

Facilitate project start up and help build stakeholder support

The **general objective** of the inception meetings is to facilitate smooth start up of the PTF partners' social accountability initiatives by orienting stakeholders on the aims and major activities of their projects. The one-day activity had the following **specific objectives**:

1. Come to a shared understanding of the PTF partners' social accountability projects - project objectives, major components, activities - with major stakeholders, including project staff, volunteers, other citizen groups, and local government counterparts.
2. Arrive at a collective assessment of the existing relationships between citizen groups and public officials in the PTF project sites,

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- and identify ways for strengthening and improving such relationships towards constructive engagement under the projects.
- 3. Draft an initial work plan for the PTF projects with stakeholders, identifying some key issues or challenges for implementation and ways of addressing them, strategies and approaches for the sustaining initiatives, and their roles in project implementation.

Discussion points during the meetings

Sustaining engagement during the elections and beyond

Meeting with RECITE (18 February)

- The assessment of present citizen-government engagement pointed to some efforts at transparency and inclusive governance, including: 1) Provision of public services with support or participation of citizen groups (e.g., medical missions, tree planting, disaster management training); 2) Making budget reports and documents available to the public; 3) Conduct of regular assemblies in some barangays and communities. The stakeholders also noted good working relations in terms of matters pertaining to government's CCT program implementation (which will just be starting in Mangaldan this year).
- Said assessment also pointed to some challenges: 1) Lack of awareness and cooperation among ordinary citizens; 2) Lack of public consultations about some proposed laws and local policies; 3) Public services not reaching the most needy members of the community (e.g., health services). During the orientation on RECITE's project, the participants raised a concerns including the need to clarify the roles of local governments in implementing the conditional cash transfer (CCT) program, and enhancing capacities of parent leaders as well as DSWD and municipal social workers in constructive engagement (CE).

Meeting with CCAGG (20 February)

- The on-going campaign for the local elections has brought about some friction between CCAGG and local politicians in the project's target barangays. Some incumbent officials have been discouraging barangay residents from attending CCAGG activities in light of the latter's campaign against vote-buying and other election irregularities. CCAGG still plans to push through with its covenant signing and its voters' education campaign.
- In light of recent engagements with the target barangays, the following were highlighted during the meeting: 1) Need to strengthen the youth

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arm (YCCAGG) and the community volunteer groups (Peñarrubia Association for Social Accountability or PASA) as possible mechanisms for sustaining the engagement with government; 2) Need to expand scope of planned workshops on participatory barangay budgeting to involve other groups and sectors; 3) Work for the accreditation of PASA within the municipal development council (MDC) so it can provide inputs to planning at that level. Other concerns with CCAGG's project involved: 1) Capacity of community volunteer monitors for CE; and, 2) Coming out with a shared development agenda for the participatory budgeting.

Meeting with KARSA (12 March)

- The pre-meeting discussion with KARSA leaders and the inception meeting itself pointed to the group's existing strengths in terms of recognition by local government as well as by the community (as evidenced by its existing role as mediator among warring tribes, as citizen monitor of government projects, and as consultant on local socio-civic concerns – e.g., it was invited by the local state-college to provide inputs to its academic programs).
- The discussion, however, also pointed to some weaknesses: 1) Shallow bench in terms of few second-liners and younger leaders who can support project management; 2) Weak organizational capacity for documenting their experiences and sharing knowledge from their monitoring work. There was some exchange on possible strategies and approaches for expanding the scope of the project given limited resources (e.g., networking with the academe, offering training modules to local governments, mobilizing the youth).

Agreements and identified next steps

Agenda for ANSA EAP's capacity building support

Discussions among project stakeholders during the meetings, and consultations with leaders of RECITE, CCAGG, and KARSA pointed to some capacity gaps in terms of effectively carrying out the proposed PTF projects. These gaps highlighted the following areas in terms of ANSA EAP's possible learning and capacity building support within the next few months:

RECITE:

1. Enhancing its scorecard tool for the monitoring of local health services
2. Sharing experiences of other groups in monitoring local health services

Agreements and identified next steps*Agenda for ANSA EAP's capacity building support***CCAGG:**

1. Methodologies in introducing young people to social accountability framework
2. Sharing on participatory planning and budgeting tools/approaches

KARSA:

1. Techniques and tools in documenting experiences and sharing knowledge
2. Sharing on networking approaches as strategy for sustaining SAc initiatives

Possible modes for delivering said capacity building support include area-based workshops or learning events, and online mentoring and coaching. As much as possible, the partners agreed with ANSA EAP that sharing of the experiences and knowledge from other groups of social accountability practitioners and collective reflection and brainstorming should be the main approaches for the proposed workshops, rather than straight lectures or inputs. ANSA EAP committed to come out with a detailed learning program and designs for the proposed learning events and to coordinate with partners in the coming weeks for the final schedules of the said activities (including the necessary logistical arrangements).

In addition to the final learning event initially agreed upon by the Consortium in the MOA, the Technical Working Group (TWG) is suggesting a post-election sharing event to provide the partners space for exchanging experiences and lessons from their election interventions. ANSA EAP agreed to prepare appropriate budget estimates for this mid-term workshop for the TWG's consideration during its next meeting (date to be determined).