

Activity notes
Strategic planning workshop
ANSA EAP-PTF-CAC MBC Enhancing Impact of
Citizen-Led Transparency Initiatives Project
Dagupan City, Philippines
29-30 October 2012

Background and rationale

Sustaining social accountability initiatives at the local level

- 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 29-30 October 2012, the PTF Consortium met with representatives of the four (4) member-organizations of the Northern Luzon Coalition for Good Governance (NLCGG) Convenor Group at Lenox Hotel in Dagupan City for a strategic planning workshop on the proposed pilot monitoring projects in Pangasinan, Abra, and Kalinga. The groups included the Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Governance (CCAGG), Community Volunteer Missioners (CVM), Kalinga Apayao Religious Sector Association (KARSA), and Responsible Citizens, Empowered Communities In Solidarity for Social Change (RECITE). The said workshop came at the heels of ANSA EAP's meeting with the NLCGG Convenor Group in Baguio City last 12 October 2012 wherein partnership parameters for the PTF project were ironed out and agreed upon with the NLCGG leaders and members.

Proposed workshop objectives

Localizing PTF's results framework and defining pilot initiatives

The strategic planning was intended mainly to define key result areas and initial work plans for the current PTF project in selected pilot sites within the provinces of Pangasinan, Abra, and Kalinga. Specifically, said planning activity had the following objectives:

1. Come to a shared understanding of social accountability contexts in selected project sites as a prelude to the partners' strategy

Proposed workshop objectives

Localizing PTF's results framework and defining pilot initiatives

- development and customization;
2. Identify existing capacities, capacity gaps, and urgent learning needs of partners in terms of the proposed citizen monitoring and constructive engagement;
3. Share lessons from other similar initiatives in localizing social accountability tools and approaches as starting point for the collective reflection and planning;
4. Customize PTF project's results framework in the selected project sites by identifying a focus theme or issue, performance targets, and possible monitoring indicators;
5. Come out with project ideas for the proposed citizen monitoring that is grounded on the partners' strategic plans for sustaining social accountability initiatives; and,
6. Draft indicative operational plan and budget for next six (6) months based on agreed upon strategic plan, including interventions for capacity building and learning.

Key discussion points during the planning

Need for focus and clarity in outlining target results

- There may be a need to balance network members' desire to share available resources and the need to achieve some focus in its work. This is in light of the limited funds that is available for the current PTF project. With such small amount for each pilot project, there is more pressure for the network proponents to clarify their intended results to ensure that these are attainable. There is also a greater demand to think through the project's overall design, and include components that could help sustain the initiative beyond its proposed time frame (around 6-8 months for the actual monitoring).
- Initial assessment by participating groups point to some variations in the existing social accountability contexts within the proposed project sites. Local government support to citizen participation and monitoring ranges from outright opposition (e.g., indigenous versus mainstream governance systems and practices in Kalinga), to openness or actual engagement (as in the case of municipality of Mangaldan in Pangasinan, barangay units in Peñarrubia in Abra and Tabuk City in Kalinga). There is a need to continue the context assessment in proposed sites to further clarify available spaces for engagement.
- Initial capacity assessment by participating organizations during the workshop point to the following learning agenda for the project: 1) Assessing experiences and drawing out lessons from previous or on-going citizen monitoring initiatives is currently not a regular component of the groups' capacity building efforts. The current

Key discussion points during the planning

Need for focus and clarity in outlining target results

PTF project can help in this regard by helping to develop and institutionalize appropriate practices both at the organizational and the network levels. 2) Monitoring tools used by participating groups will need further refinement in terms of building on the gains from previous work and situating it firmly on the Public Financial Management (PFM) cycle of local governments. 3) Honing constructive engagement skills, particularly in following up local government on its commitments to address identified governance problems, and documenting and effectively communicating experiences also came out as priority learning needs.

- Experiences from the GWatch project on localizing citizen monitoring point to valuable role of citizen monitoring in terms of identifying or setting standards of good governance practice, actively pushing for compliance in existing projects of the local governments, and ensuring action on issues raised with regard to project design and implementation. In all three areas, constructive engagement through “problem-solving sessions” with the local government proved to be an important strategy for institutionalization.
- Participating groups may want to consider advocacy for local government support to citizen monitoring as a sustainability strategy. Rationale and framework (system and rules) for such support though need to be clarified well to ensure the independence of citizen groups and the monitoring process. Emerging mechanisms: 1) A percentage of local governments’ budget for development programs can be set aside as support for citizen monitoring (e.g., in Naga City); 2) Support or initiative can come from national agencies (e.g., bottom-up budgeting of the National Anti-Poverty Commission).
- Proposal development by participating groups need to address the following questions:
 - a) What is/are the key governance or development problem/s that the group intends to address through citizen monitoring of and engagement with government?
 - b) How will citizen monitoring and constructive engagement with the local government help address or contribute toward finding solutions to the identified problems?
 - c) How does the group plan to mobilize or facilitate active participation of stakeholders in the citizen monitoring initiative and in other related project activities?
 - d) What resources or support (including learning and capacity building) will the group require to carry out the identified approaches, interventions, or activities?
 - e) What is the group’s strategy of engagement for the upcoming May 2013 elections, and how can this strategy be properly integrated within its overall work plan?

Key discussion points during the planning

Need for focus and clarity in outlining target results

- f) How will the group measure success (what are the target results, what are the key indicators, how and when to measure) in relation to the proposed initiative?
- g) What are the group's main strategies or approaches in ensuring the continuation or sustainability of the initiative beyond the project's time frame (6-8 months)?

Agreements and identified next steps

Project proposal development and grant-making

With some initial project parameters outlined at the end of the strategic planning workshop, the PTF Consortium and participating NLCGG groups proceeded to formalize the partnership by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which spelled out the objectives of the partnership, the roles of partners, and minimum partnership governance mechanisms.

Other next steps identified by the group during the workshop:

- Drafting of the four (4) project proposals, with detailed work plan and proposed budget, and submission to the PTF Consortium within 19-23 November 2012. The Consortium will then email comments and suggestions for further improvement of the proposals in the succeeding weeks. Target is to have all qualified proposals processed and approved by 10-14 December, so preparations for implementation can begin early in 2013.
- ANSA EAP will review the identified learning needs and develop appropriate learning program with the Consortium and NLCGG partners in November and December.