LEARNING FOR LOCAL PARTICIPATORY PLANNING AND BUDGETING

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) have embarked on a joint project called Enhancing Transparency Impact (ETI). The project aims to enhance the results from citizen monitoring of government performance at the local level through grant-giving and knowledge sharing support.

As part of the knowledge sharing support to project grantees, ANSA EAP conducted an area-based learning event with the Young Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Governance (YCCAGG) in Bangued last July 17-19, 2013 entitled "Learning Strategies for Local Participatory Planning and Budgeting". This issue of ANSA EAP's Learning Brief provides an overview of the workshop objectives, design, and activities, as well as the lessons derived by the participants and facilitators from the learning event.
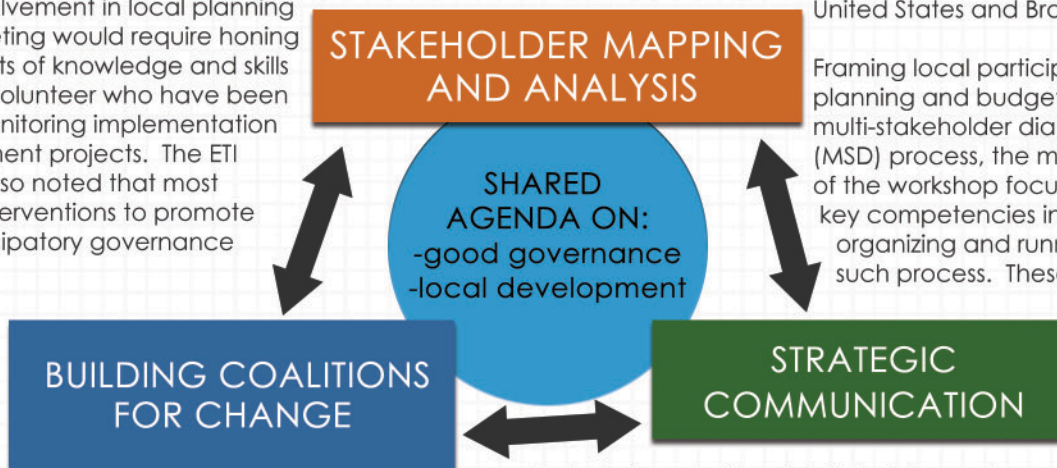
The "Learning Strategies for Local Participatory Planning and Budgeting" workshop aimed at enhancing participants' awareness on the need to ground learning approaches for participatory planning and budgeting on existing opportunities and required competencies for citizen intervention in local governance. The idea for the workshop stemmed from the grantees' expressed need to level off on their approaches to capacitating stakeholders on local participatory planning and budgeting. Such need came from the grantees' realization that more serious involvement in local planning and budgeting would require honing different sets of knowledge and skills for citizen volunteer who have been used to monitoring implementation of government projects. The ETI grantees also noted that most learning interventions to promote local participatory governance focus on the legal framework and technical approaches to local planning and budgeting. There is a big gap in terms of capacitating people on dialogue and constructive engagement towards arriving at a consensus on local priorities and a shared agenda for the planning process.

PARTICIPATORY PLANNING AND BUDGETING AS DIALOGUE

ANSA EAP's workshop design initially provided a venue for participants to come to a shared understanding of local planning and budgeting processes, entry points for citizen interventions, and current strategies for expanding and enhancing participation. These preliminary activities served as take off point for case discussions and sharing by the facilitators on participatory planning and budgeting initiatives in the United States and Brazil.

Framing local participatory planning and budgeting as a multi-stakeholder dialogue (MSD) process, the main part of the workshop focused on key competencies in organizing and running such process. These

STAKEHOLDER MAPPING AND ANALYSIS

SHARED AGENDA ON:
- good governance
- local development

BUILDING COALITIONS FOR CHANGE

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

included context and stakeholder analyses, strategic communication, building coalitions for change, and negotiating sustainable agreements. From such a broad view of the required competencies in facilitating dialogues, the workshop then went into a review of adult learning principles and techniques in designing and facilitating more interactive learning activities.

NETMAPPING: A NEW LOOK FOR STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Facilitators introduced workshop participants to the Netmapping Tool which allowed them to have a deeper view of the different actors that could influence a project or initiative, where they are coming from in a dialogue process, and what relationships exist among them.   As a more visual and engaging approach to stakeholder analysis, Netmapping provides a strategic tool for citizen groups in preparing for a dialogue process, facilitating valuable insights on how to respond to various interests, positions, and demands that could come out during the negotiation and consensus building phases. The tool is relatively simple and easy to use, and requires materials that are commonly included in a trainers' kit (easel sheets, sticky notes, markers) or which can be gathered from the traning environment (chips, coins, small stones).

For more information about Net-Mapping, see Eva Shiffer 2007. Net-Map Toolbox: Influence Mapping of Social Networks. International Food Policy Research Institute. Presented at the Sunbelt Conference of the International Network of Social Network Analysis, 01-06 May 2007, Corfu, Greece, or email ANSA EAP at info@ansa-eap.net.

INSIGHTS FROM THE WORKSHOP

During the workshop, participants pointed to the wide gap that still exist between the planning and budgeting practices of their partner barangays and local governments, and what is set out in the law. Knowledge on specific steps and their roles in ensuring participatory governance is quite limited among many officials in the participants' target barangays. Decisions in terms of setting priorities and identifying local projects thus often fell on the laps of barangay chiefs or municipal mayors. The participants, however, also noted the current government's initiatives to further enhance mechanisms for citizen involvement in local planning and budgeting. These included the Grassroots Participatory Budgeting (GPB) of the Department of Budget Management (DBM) which aimed to solicit citizen inputs in identifying appropriate local anti-poverty projects of national government agencies.

Given this context, workshop participants showed much interest in the case discussions and sharing on participatory budgeting practices in other places (Recife, Brazil, and in Chicago and Vallejo in the United States). Most attractive to them was the whole idea of residents and citizen groups developing their own project proposals and subsequently voting on such proposals to select those that will be funded by the local goverhnment.   The participants thought that these experiences can provide alternative strategies for local citizen groups in pursuing more inclusive planning and budgeting in the country.

ANSA EAP's chosen competency areas and framework resonated well with the workshop participants, though they noted that their current practice did not point to any systematic or conscious application of the related strategies and tools. For instance, they reported doing stakeholder analyses only occasionally and as part of their usual meetings or informal discussions. Learning interventions should thus surface current practice and help address challenges in applying the competencies. Another learning gap identified by the workshop participants was in terms of linking their previous monitoring initiatives with their more recent work in local planning and budgeting. In particular, there is a need to enhance citizen groups' capacities to: (1) Develop and customize tools for collating and processing monitoring data as inputs to the planning process; (2) Effectively communicate these performance monitoring results to local officials and the public.

In the course of discussions on public dialogue and agenda-building, participants also realized the need to network with other stakeholders to help sustain their efforts and gain support for their initiatives. The short time frame for implementing social accountability projects often forces citizen groups to do things on their own, or to limit partnerships with familiar groups.

Finally, workshop participants and facilitators realized the importance of proper timing and design in their learning interventions to ensure that these effectively support specific phases of their social accountability initiatives. They also noted the need to veer away from straightforward sharing of information, and use more group reflection activities, sharing on other groups' experiences and lessons, guided application (through mentoring and coaching), and other similar alternative learning approaches in future learning interventions.