



Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific
... connecting citizens to improve governance

MIDTERM REPORT ON ENHANCING THE IMPACT OF CITIZEN-LED TRANSPARENCY INITIATIVES FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE (ETI) PROJECT



Year 1

September 2012 – December 2013

The present report summarizes accomplishments and insights of the Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA EAP) in carrying out knowledge sharing efforts with stakeholders during the ETI project's first phase.

Midterm report on Enhancing the Impact of Citizen-led Transparency Initiatives for Good Governance (ETI) Project

SEPTEMBER 2012 – DECEMBER 2013

1 BACKGROUND ON ANSA EAP'S ROLE

In August 2012, ANSA EAP entered into an agreement with the Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF) and the Makati Business Club – Coalition Against Corruption (MBC-CAC) in line with the implementation of “Enhancing the Impact of Citizen-led Transparency Initiatives for Good Governance Project”. The said project was made possible through a grant to PTF from the Australian government. It aimed to improve results from citizen-driven efforts towards good governance in the Philippines by providing fund support to groups involved in such initiatives and sharing knowledge from good practices.

ANSA EAP agreed to take on specific roles under the knowledge sharing component: 1) Organize at least two (2) workshops with project stakeholders; 2) Produce communication and knowledge sharing materials on social accountability initiatives of partners and other citizen groups in the country; and, 3) Facilitate at least two (2) case studies on topics related to citizen monitoring of government performance. Towards the end of the project's first phase, and as a result of PTF's revised grant agreement with AusAID, ANSA EAP also committed to set up a citizen monitoring website and help convene a “knowledge consortium” among citizen groups involved in the Philippine government's bottom-up budgeting initiative.

2 KEY OUTPUTS FOR THE PERIOD

Major outputs under the project's knowledge sharing component included a learning partnership with the Northern Luzon Coalition for Good Governance (NLCGG), local citizen monitors who are able to adapt social accountability tools to their contexts, design effective training programs, and capture lessons from their work, documented practice in local participatory planning and in citizen monitoring of government's conditional cash transfer (CCT) program, developed and disseminated assessment tools and knowledge materials, shared experiences and lessons from the project's first phase, and an initial framework and for facilitating knowledge sharing online and with a broader community of practitioners.

2.1 Learning partnership with NLCGG

As per agreement with PTF and MBC-CAC, ANSA EAP started partnership-building with members of the NLCGG – a network of citizen groups and individuals operating within Regions 1, 2, and the Cordillera Autonomous Region or CAR – in mid-September 2012. ANSA EAP's project coordinator initially met with leaders of the Responsible Citizens, Empowered Communities In Solidarity for Social Change (RECITE) Inc., NLCGG's current secretariat, in Pangasinan. This was followed by a meeting with representatives of five

(5) member organizations of NLCGG on October 2012 in Baguio City. Project implementers signed the final Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NLCGG representatives during the strategic planning and proposal development workshop in Dagupan City towards the end of the same month.

The partnership-building process facilitated by ANSA EAP resulted in the following: 1) Identification of RECITE, Concerned Citizens of Abra for Good Governance (CCAGG), and Kalinga Apayao Religious Sector Association (KARSA) as project grantees for the first year; 2) Development of grantees' project proposals with identified focus on citizen engagement in public planning and budgeting at the *barangay* level and monitoring of public services related to CCT conditionalities; and, 3) Grantees' commitment to champion collective learning towards improved social accountability practice within NLCGG.

The partnership process culminated in the inception meetings organized by ANSA EAP with the three (3) Year 1 grantees and their respective stakeholders during the first quarter of 2013. The series of one-day meetings held in Mangaldan, Bangued, and Tabuk City oriented participants on the ETI project and the grantees' social accountability initiatives. The meetings also helped to ensure that local stakeholders were on board the grantees' initiatives and took part in subsequent learning activities.

2.2 Trained social accountability practitioners

A total of fifty two (52) individuals – leaders and staff of the ETI project's grantees, their partners from target communities and government agencies, and other NLCGG member-organizations – attended the four (4) workshops conducted by ANSA EAP during the period. These local learning events included the proposal development workshop in Dagupan City, which also served as an occasion for sharing tools and approaches in assessing the local social accountability context, identifying existing gaps in organizational capacities for doing citizen monitoring, and designing a social accountability project. Insights gained by the participants from this exchange served as inputs in finalizing their project proposals.

Results of the organizational capacities assessment during the Dagupan workshop also served as basis for deciding on the topics for the three (3) learning events subsequently organized by ANSA EAP. The topics included: 1) Customizing community score cards (CSCs) as a participatory performance monitoring (PPM) approach; 2) Designing and facilitating learning interventions for promoting local participatory planning and budgeting; and, 3) Capturing and communicating lessons from social accountability initiatives. Post-workshop evaluation by participants indicated high level of satisfaction in terms of amount of knowledge gained and perceived usefulness or applicability of such knowledge to their work.¹

Immediate results from these workshops in terms of the grantees' work included: 1) RECITE designed and used community scorecards on local public health service delivery and the performance of parent-leaders (PLs) in the CCT program²; 2) CCAGG integrated more learning activities that built on or started from the participants' own experiences into their workshops on local participatory planning.³

2.3 Documented social accountability cases

¹ In a rating scale of 1-4 (with 1 being the lowest, and 4 highest): average of 3.87 in terms of new knowledge gained from the workshops; 3.7 in terms of usefulness of acquired knowledge and skills to participants' work.

² RECITE 2013. Project ASA-CL Applied Social Accountability at the Community Level. Powerpoint presentation during the final knowledge sharing workshop for Year 1, 3 December 2013, Astoria Plaza Hotel.

³ Interview with Elizabeth Valera, ETI Project Coordinator, from short video presentation on CCAGG's project during the final knowledge workshop for Year 1, 3 December 2013, Astoria Plaza Hotel.

ANSA EAP facilitated the conduct of two (2) case studies focusing on: 1) Efforts of citizen groups at the barangay level to engage local officials in participatory planning and budgeting; and, 2) Initial citizen monitoring initiatives targeting specific aspects of the Philippine government's *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino* Program (4Ps). The first study examined processes and strategies carried out by five (5) citizen groups, including CCAGG and KARSA under the ETI project, while the second was able to cover four (4) citizen monitoring initiatives including that by RECITE. Data-gathering targeted project implementers, concerned public officials, as well as volunteer monitors. Data analysis involved both examination of the monitoring process carried out in each case, and comparison of techniques or tools used across cases.

Insights from the case studies centered on: 1) The huge gap in citizen-government engagement at the local level (especially at barangay and municipal levels), and the potential for capacity building or knowledge sharing on participatory local governance approaches as entry point for such engagement. 2) The need to focus citizen monitoring of the 4Ps to existing feedback and public service delivery mechanisms at the local level as a way of enhancing local governments' ownership of the program and improving its chances of being sustained. ANSA EAP and the contracted researchers have produced and shared with partners initial drafts of the two case study reports. Both drafts are due for revision and final packaging.

2.4 Assessment tools and knowledge products

ANSA EAP adapted its tools for assessing the social accountability environment and existing capacities in citizen monitoring for application at the local level, and used these to help grantees plan out their social accountability initiatives. Both tools consisted of guide questions, with that on the local context organized according to four (4) areas: 1) Government responsiveness; 2) Capacities of citizen groups; 3) Access to information; and, 4) Cultural factors. The capacity assessment tool looked at the following characteristics of citizen groups: 1) Experience in citizen monitoring; 2) Social accountability's place in their goals and systems; 3) Competencies in research and constructive engagement; 4) Competencies in running learning programs; and, 5) Ability to communicate monitoring findings and work with other groups.

Documentation of knowledge sharing activities implemented during the period led to several knowledge products and communication materials that helped in disseminating emerging project insights to a broader audience. These knowledge products and communication materials included the following:

- **One (1) practice brief on local participatory planning and budgeting.** ANSA EAP's Practice Brief series attempts to distill significant experience and lessons from on-going projects. This first issue under the ETI project focused on efforts of citizen groups to address existing capacity gaps and build multi-sectoral shared agenda as entry points for engaging local governments.
- **Three (3) learning briefs on workshops with grantees.** ANSA EAP's Learning Brief series aims to share information about the design, conduct, and key results of its training and other capacity building interventions. The three issues produced during the ETI project's initial phase looked into these aspects of the workshops on CSC, learning for local participatory planning and budgeting, and capturing and communicating lessons from social accountability initiatives.
- **Two (2) case study briefs.** These were summaries of the draft case study reports on monitoring of the CCT program and citizen engagement in local planning, that were meant to create initial

awareness and interest on the ETI project's research outputs among practitioners and decision-makers. The briefs outlined the research objectives, methodologies, and key findings.

- **One (1) profile of grantees' projects.** This material provided an overview of the objectives, strategies, and initial results of the local social accountability initiatives undertaken by RECITE, CCAGG, and KARSA. As such, it complemented the short videos on these initiatives (see below) by situating perceived initial outcomes within the ETI grantees' interventions.
- **Three (3) short videos on grantees' monitoring initiatives.** Each 4-5 minutes video features a brief explanation on what the citizen monitoring tried to do and its most significant results, from the point of views of both the grantees and their stakeholders. Interviews conducted in producing the videos also served to check on impact from ANSA EAP's knowledge sharing interventions.

All materials were posted to ANSA EAP's website (www.ansa-eap.net) and Facebook page. There have been a total of 384 views for all ETI materials over a two-month period since these were made available online.⁴ The ETI project page is now one of the most visited within ANSA EAP's website with total unique page views of 258. Apart from the knowledge products mentioned above, ANSA EAP's communication team also posted news items and reports on ETI project activities (e.g., proposal development workshop, project inception meetings with the grantees' stakeholders, and the three local learning events).

2.5 Shared experience and lessons from Year 1

RECITE, CCAGG, and KARSA shared the results from their social accountability initiatives in a workshop that ANSA EAP conducted last 3 December 2013 at the Astoria Plaza Hotel in Pasig City. The said final knowledge sharing workshop drew in around 28 participants from the ETI project partners, other citizen groups, academic institutions, local government units, national agencies, and donor groups. These included Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) Undersecretary Angelita Gregorio-Medel who cited the grantees' experience as validation of the viability of citizen-government engagement not only in government performance but also in creating changes in capacities and relationships of stakeholders.

Insights from the workshop included the following: 1) Apart from replication in other areas or at a higher level of governance (e.g., from the barangay to municipal level), scaling up local citizen monitoring could involve linking efforts at local and national levels, exploring collaboration with groups that have not been traditionally involved in such work (e.g., schools, socio-civic groups, media), and adopting more systematic and evidence-based monitoring tools (e.g., scorecards). 2) In the area of knowledge sharing, focus should be placed on disseminating results and lessons, providing information about opportunities for joint action, and consolidating data from citizen monitoring initiatives as inputs to policy-making.

2.6 Framework for online portal and knowledge consortium

PTF's amended grant agreement with AusAID that came out in September 2013 added two deliverable under the ETI project's knowledge sharing component: 1) A "third party monitoring" (TPM) resource book; and, 2) Secretariat support to a knowledge consortium under the government's grassroots planning and budgeting process. After a series of meetings and exchange of notes, the ETI project partners arrived at some initial understanding on how to work on these outputs and link them to other interventions.

⁴ January to February 2014. 224 views on the short videos, 160 on the learning briefs.

As identified knowledge sharing needs in promoting local citizen monitoring go beyond dissemination of results and lessons from such initiatives (see preceding section), project partners thought that developing a website instead of just a resource book could better address these needs. The site could be lodged in the existing ANSA EAP website, and designed to serve not only as a repository of knowledge materials but also as a platform for actively promoting sharing and use of these products. Initially, uploaded materials will be grouped according to the following categories: 1) Infographics on basic roles and responsibilities of key actors in local participatory governance; 2) Manuals, handbooks, modules, etc. on basic processes, strategies, and tools in citizen monitoring; 3) Consolidation of monitoring findings and results.

The knowledge consortium was meant to bring together citizen groups engaging with the government on its bottom-up budgeting initiative to facilitate consolidation, dissemination, and use of existing knowledge on participatory governance especially at the sub-national levels. Since September 2013, the ANSA EAP has conducted four (4) caucuses and meetings with citizen groups and officials from concerned agencies (Department of Interior and Local Government, National Anti-Poverty Commission, Department of Budget and Management) to clarify further the consortium's nature and tasks. Some of the identified strategies: 1) Regional reflection and knowledge sharing activities; 2) Mapping of existing knowledge products and dissemination through online platforms and communities of practice (CoPs); 3) Conduct of joint researches and dissemination of research reports on the bottom-up budgeting process and results.

3 INITIAL OUTCOMES FROM THE PROJECT

The last local learning event with grantees conducted by ANSA EAP in Tabuk City last September 2013 focused on drawing out and documenting perceived changes in the behaviour, attitudes, and practice of project stakeholders (implementers, government partners, and community members) that came about as a result of project interventions. Some of the key outcomes highlighted by the participants:

3.1 Improved monitoring, learning, and engagement

Project implementers from RECITE, CCAGG, and KARSA pointed to changes in their own practice of social accountability in terms of more systematic monitoring through the use of tools like the score card, improved ways of facilitating learning on participatory governance approaches, and adoption of more constructive strategies in engaging with government counterparts. Building on their insights from ANSA EAP's learning event in May 2013, RECITE started using community score cards to involve local stakeholders in assessing the quality of public health services provided to 4Ps beneficiaries in the municipality of Mangaldan. Key benefits noted by RECITE facilitators in using the score card included the opportunities it provides in terms of getting users' views on indicators or standards of quality service delivery, and generating information on public sector performance that could be valuable inputs to local government planning.

In Abra, CCAGG reported re-designing their training modules on participatory planning and budgeting to make these more learner-oriented by integrating a training needs assessment (TNA) and more learning activities to encourage participants to speak out and reflect on their context. KARSA leaders noted initial shifts in their attitude toward government and their relationships with local officials – from being an anti-corruption watchdog used to confrontational tactics, to that of being an open dialogue practitioner trying out constructive approaches in resolving governance issues brought to light by citizen monitoring.

3.2 Increased openness to engage among local officials

Grantees noted their government counterparts becoming more aware of responsibilities in ensuring broad participation in local governance processes and more receptive to communities' demands. As one of their most significant change stories, CCAGG members cited their efforts to meet and negotiate with the mayor in Bangued in order to get the latter's support for their ETI project. From outright opposition as a result of CCAGG's campaign against vote buying during the elections, the local chief executive eventually agreed to the conduct of CCAGG's training on participatory planning in the target barangays.

As a result of their training and partnership building interventions, KARSA shared stories about officials in the five (5) target barangays in Tabuk City recognizing and allowing the citizen-led Barangay Monitoring Teams (BMTs) to participate in barangay council meetings. In spite of the initial perception among local government officials that they were left out in the 4Ps implementation, local health officials in Mangaldan took part in the local learning event on community score cards organized by ANSA EAP with RECITE, and later participated in the conduct of RECITE's score card process with parent-leaders.

3.3 Enhanced citizen awareness, voice, and demand

Parent-leaders who have undergone Family Development Sessions (FDS)⁵ and other training activities with RECITE reported the following changes: 1) Increased awareness of their rights as citizens (in contrast to their previous subservient consciousness and attitude as beneficiaries of government's welfare program); 2) Increased capacities in terms of facilitating group processes, conducting FDS with other beneficiaries, and performing leadership roles within their respective 4Ps cluster; and, 3) Increased confidence to voice out their concerns and inquiries – especially those related to government's plans for the poor. RECITE has started to build on such changes by involving the PLs in dialogues with barangay and municipal officials towards clarification of the local government's allocation for specific sectors or needs.⁶

Young people in Abra who were able to participate in CCAGG's training of trainers (ToT) noted how they were subsequently able to facilitate and conduct training on local participatory planning and budgeting with barangay officials and community members on their own. Representatives from barangays Dumayco and Lusac mentioned how they became more aware of the need to organize themselves and collectively raise long-standing concerns about the potable water system with local officials. KARSA members noted residents and tribal leaders in Tabuk City, that they were able to mobilize for a public forum, demanding clean elections from local politicians. KARSA's efforts also encouraged participation of young people and women in the voters' education and in subsequent engagements with the barangay officials.

⁵ One of the unique features of the Philippines' CCT program is the requirement for beneficiaries to attend monthly education sessions which are supposed to provide values orientation and capacity development opportunities. DSWD has tapped some citizen groups to conduct FDS in particular areas. Before the ETI project, RECITE was one of these service providers and had a chance to pilot its FDS Plus program which included a module on active citizenship and good governance.

⁶ RECITE has started visioning and project identification initiatives with PLs and barangay officials on children's concerns. In one barangay, it has already convinced barangay officials to allot Php 24,000 per year in an indigent feeding program to help address malnutrition and low school attendance among children from poor families.

4 INSIGHTS AND NEXT STEPS

As with its previous learning and knowledge sharing work, a major challenge experienced by ANSA EAP in the ETI project's first year was understanding the grantees' learning needs and context, and coming out with appropriate ways of providing support. In this light, the ETI project also provided the organization opportunities to look more closely into how knowledge sharing interventions can help enhance local social accountability work. The following insights emerged from the organization's reflection on this point:

- Viewed as a sustained way of improving social accountability practice, knowledge sharing should not be taken as a one-time process of determining the existing knowhow, and deciding on the best dissemination strategy. First, it has to be concerned with how citizen practitioners are generating knowledge – i.e., how they are tracking their own progress and results, and capturing lessons from their work. Second, knowledge sharing needs to look at how their dissemination or communication approaches can help other groups decide on proper adoption or customization strategies. Finally, knowledge sharing also needs to problematize how to support continued implementation.
- While the ETI project's use of different knowledge sharing strategies had the benefit of providing options for joint learning and dissemination of insights, it also posed some challenges in terms of carrying out these strategies and ensuring that they effectively support each other. Face-to-face workshops or learning events, case study research, and use of mainstream and social media cater to different audiences and imply different requirements or considerations (e.g., failure to bring in bloggers and social media practitioners during the final knowledge sharing event brought home the point that ANSA EAP may need to build more long-term relationships with such groups).
- Knowledge sharing may need to be sustained to ensure that it contributes to enhancing the impact of citizen monitoring especially at the local or sub-national level. Experiences with the ETI year 1 grantees and initial discussions with the bottom-up budgeting knowledge consortium point to some observations which tend to support this insight: 1) Weak citizen group presence and engagement with government below the provincial level; 2) Weak dissemination and utilization of knowledge and knowledge products generated by national networks or citizen groups. Apart from applying specific tools, knowledge sharing initiatives need to think about building more long-term learning communities and partnerships that integrate such tools or approaches into their programs.

Moving forward with the ETI project's second phase, ANSA EAP aims to build on these insights in carrying out the following focus and strategies in terms of its knowledge sharing interventions:

1. Put more emphasis in setting up the online resource portal for local citizen monitoring as a way of broadening the coverage of current learning and knowledge sharing efforts. The website could facilitate linking of Year 2 grantees' projects with other participatory local governance efforts (e.g., bottom-up budgeting), and complement planned workshops with the grantees.
2. Implement more communication activities as ANSA EAP or in partnership with social media groups and local media outfits toward disseminating information and knowhow on citizen monitoring and engagement with the local government. These engagements could also serve as a way of sharing and eliciting more feedback on the project's case studies about local level citizen monitoring.

3. Shift focus of knowledge sharing workshops from providing direct learning support to the Year 2 grantees towards facilitating broader conversations or dialogues with other citizen groups and government partners on how to advance citizen monitoring at the local level. Put more attention to coming out with clear action points and recommendations during such workshops.
4. Focus on developing the knowledge consortium as a possible community of practice (CoP) that can help sustain knowledge sharing on citizen monitoring of government and participatory governance approaches among citizen groups and other stakeholders (government, donor agencies, etc.).