The festive season of October also brought those working in the field of Public Financial Management (PFM) a reason to celebrate. At a workshop organized by PRAN, OAG and the World Bank Institute, Mr. Bhanu Prasad Acharya, Nepal’s Auditor General, spoke of the importance of civil society in the auditing process. The workshop, held on 6 and 7 October saw engaging participation from high ranking officials from OAG and representatives from PRAN’s civil society Organizations.

For the first time in the history of Nepal, an agenda is being brought forward that promises to maximize the efficiency and impact of government auditing through engagement with other stakeholders. At a workshop that took place on 6 and 7 October at the OAG, Nepal’s Auditor General, Mr. Bhanu Prasad Acharya said: “I feel the participation and perspective of the civil society organizations (CSOs) will assist us to improve the current system of auditing in Nepal.”

The workshop on “Advancing Public Participation in the Audit Process in Nepal” has given a paradigm shift towards the approach to the Nepalese auditing process. Organized by the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) Nepal in collaboration with the World Bank Nepal Country Office, the Program for Accountability in Nepal (PRAN), and The World Bank Institute (WBI), the workshop’s major objective was to facilitate the engagement between OAG (supply side) and civil societies (demand side) towards exploring challenges and opportunities for implementing various participatory audit mechanisms in Nepal.

Rethinking social accountability in Africa: lessons from the Mwananchi Programme

By Fletcher Tembo

This report draws on five years' of lessons and case studies from implementing the Mwananchi Governance and Transparency Programme in six African countries: Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zambia.

It argues that there are three major problems with the way social accountability initiatives are designed and implemented.

Finding Answers to Social Accountability through PETS

It’s interesting to see how Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS) have become an essential tool for social accountability in Nepal.

At a workshop organized by the World Bank’s Program for Accountability in Nepal (PRAN) and the World Bank Institute (WBI), more than 50 social accountability practitioners gathered to share a practical, hands-on experience on PETS from 30th September until 3rd October in Kavre, Nepal.

PETS is a social accountability tool by which citizens track the amount of government’s budget allocated to activities implemented by the local bodies (VDCs, DDCs and Municipalities). “In the current scenario with the absence of elected representatives throughout the country, we need a tool that would hold the administration accountable and PETS meets all the criteria,” said one of the participants, Mahendra Prasad Pandey, PRAN’s Social Accountability Practitioner in Kapilbastu.

The workshop brought together national, as well as international experts to share their experiences on implementing the PETS methodology. The participants were not just taught the specifics of PETS, but were given opportunities to field-test the survey questionnaires on old age, widow and disabled social security entitlements in the VDCs and municipalities of Kavre district.

“The field–based training gave us an excellent overview of what we could expect when we take these surveys out in the village. The workshop was highly effective as it gave us a better sense of the practical implications of asking detailed questions on who received these entitlements, from whom, for how much and when,” says Neelu Thapa, another participant from SAWTEE.

Through the use of PETS, people can find out whether the local government’s specific plans, programs and resources have reached their intended targets, whether the money was spent for the approved purpose and, if not, what ways can be identified to ensure that the budget is spent as per the approved purposes.

“Our partners felt the need for such PETS training as most village communities lack proper knowledge on budget transparency and accountability issues. We believe that citizens can more effectively hold their government accountable through such community-led, demand-driven tools as PETS. Through the Program for Accountability in Nepal–PRAN, we are able to provide practical training to develop the capacity of civil society in partnership with their government to promote social accountability in Nepal,” says Keith D. Leslie, PRAN’s Coordinator.

Budget Work

An online module on budget review tool

Budgets are at the very core of how a government plans to provide for its citizens. By looking at a public budget, we can get an initial understanding of a government’s priorities and plans how it plans to spend its money, and on whom.

For this reason, it is of the utmost importance that ordinary citizens and civil society organizations are equipped with the skills to understand, analyze, and act upon information contained in public budgets.

This module will outline “budget work” or independent budget review and analysis as a social accountability tool, covering the theoretical aspects of the approach as well as the practical aspects necessary for effective implementation. It will go beyond basic budgetary review and analysis to also discuss budget literacy programs and related budget review tools.

Click here for details: http://ansa-sar.org/2012/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=702&Itemid=122

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