



## **Background Paper No. 5 Country Governance Advisors in the South Asia Region: Experience and Implications for Global Practices**

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### **Functions**

SAR has five Governance Advisors (GAs) based in the field covering Afghanistan, Bangladesh/Nepal, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka/Maldives. Three advisors are GHs and are designated formally as Governance Advisors (Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan) while the other two are technically GG level Sr. Governance Specialists. The function of Governance Advisor in Nepal has de facto been carried out by two other Sr. Governance Specialists (one in country and one Delhi-based).

GAs' functions are essentially the same across countries though there is no particular unified TOR. These functions are:

- Political intelligence. This involves providing up-to-date reporting on political and governance trends and advising teams (and mostly the CMU) on how these impact operations and AAA;
- Support for GAC in operations. Serve as a resource on institutional development issues (e.g. RTI, use of country systems) as well as providing cross support on risk assessment and mitigation. GAs are key members of country operational management teams that review portfolio performance, risk, and learning on GAC. In India, this role has explicitly included approval of Governance and Accountability Action Plans and in other countries involvement in the review of GAAPs (mainly Nepal and now Bangladesh). In individual cases, it has involved working with INT on projects.
- Analytical work on governance, particularly in sectors. Political economy analysis, institutional effectiveness assessments
- Engaging the client, civil society, and other DPs on governance issues.

In addition, GAs work on specific operations or AAA as part of their governance/public sector work. This has involved TTL-ing SILs, PforRs, and AAA. This work is often interconnected with the GA functions.

In practice the amount of time spent on these functions varies greatly depending on demands from the CMU and to a lesser extent other sectors. A rough estimate is that the India GA spends over half of his time on the above functions largely due to the volume of GAAPs, while the others spend considerably less than half their time on the GA functions. There remains great but not always fulfilled potential for richer horizontal engagement with sectors; in some instances GAs are closely working on institutional assessments and other strategic analyses of governance

hurdles to sector work, but this is ad hoc and largely a result of circumstances and perhaps personalities.

Pros of the Model	Cons of the Model
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proximity to the client allows for addressing more proactively GAC issues, particularly institutional/country systems development</li> <li>• Provides consistency in addressing GAC issues across portfolio</li> <li>• On demand expertise available to CMUs and sectors</li> <li>• Vehicle for transfer of GAC-relevant experience/lessons learned across country teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost (though can be mitigated by with other activities for advisors)</li> <li>• Limitations in what support can be provided (only so much one person can do or know; in country knowledge is important whereas advisors tend to be expatriates)</li> <li>• Not always valued by sector teams (expectation that GAs simply do ORAFs/GAAPs)</li> <li>• Lack of discrete work products can be demotivating</li> </ul>

### Implications for Global Practices

There is a solid business justification for country-based governance advisors as part of the Governance practice. The openings for working on governance in many countries require deep country specific understanding and the ability to cultivate relationships which can only happen with a field presence. Governance advisors have thus been able to focus on the institutional development element of GAC which is where the center of attention should be in the new Governance practice (though recognizing the continue role of addressing fiduciary issues). For instance, India’s GA is working on regional performance management CoP while the Pakistan program has developed multiple provincial governance institutional building operations and a more nuanced approach to governance in sectors. The role that they play for amassing and deploying knowledge on GAC issues can contribute substantially to the quality of WBG engagement in countries, both through work in sectors and in contributing overall to improving public sector management.

The cross-cutting potential benefits of the work, as well as the strategic importance of governance to country engagement, have prompted cases of placing Governance Advisors in CMUs (as was previously the case in India) or country services. This placement has tended to make the role of GAs more as ‘enforcing’ adherence to GAC in the portfolio, with particular attention to fraud and corruption issues. While there are merits to a country management focus, but SAR’s experience suggests that it would be preferable to have GAs placed in a Governance practice while retaining a close support role for CMUs.

There are no particular issues with coordination that would require an overarching structure outside of the knowledge/experience sharing and human resource management that is planned within the Practice. The GAs are engaged in promoting GAC conditioned by country context.

### Challenges and Risks

The challenge in having the position is the elastic nature of the services provided. The time

spent on political intelligence may be very little; in countries perceived as relatively well performing on governance and Government concern with the issue is weak, such as Sri Lanka, there is less of a role in working with the portfolio. For smaller country programs or where governance is assessed as less of a priority (though this is rare and always debatable), it may be a luxury to have a GA. Yet having a single advisor for more than a few countries would dilute the benefits associated with the position. This issue can be mitigated if the GA function for a small number of countries is combined with other public sector work for the individual, as has occurred in SAR. On the other hand, when there is a crisis related to governance, the GA functions crowd out other activities. Finding a balance in some cases may be difficult.