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Afghan auditors learn from Nepal's Citizen Participation in Audit experience

A six-member delegation from the Supreme Audit Office (SAO) of Afghanistan visited Nepal to learn about the initiative of the Office of the Auditor General of Nepal (OAGN) on advancing citizen participation in the audit process.

The Program for Accountability in Nepal, funded by Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF), organized a program entitled 'Citizen Engagement in the Audit Process: The role of civil society organizations, opportunities for collaborations' on Nov 17, 2016. The study visit provided the SAO Afghanistan with a unique opportunity to learn more about the Citizen Participatory Audit (CPA) program in Nepal and to witness how "citizen auditors" participate and support the auditing process in key sectors like education and on performance and audit of disaster risk management programs.

Nepal has incorporated CPA in the Audit Act 2016 and the OAGN is set to start its implementation in performance audit in two areas - disaster risk recovery program and constituent development program - from next year. According to the Act, the Auditor General, on an as needed-basis, can now consult civil society on some subjects while auditing.

The OAGN, with the support of the World Bank, started the new CPA initiative in 2013 to enhance public participation in external audit in order to better liaise locally with and 'report' directly to the citizens. The main objective of CPA is to establish a strategic partnership between the OAGN and CSOs to improve financial expenditure responsibility, better calculate the availability and use of limited resources and build public trust through the introduction of the innovative participatory audit.

Nour Rahman Izedyar, Chief of Staff, SAO Afghanistan, said that Afghanistan is at the preparatory phase of public participation mechanism in its audit process. He felt that Afghanistan could learn a lot from Nepal since the CPA is already incorporated in the GoN Audit Act and is in the implementation phase. Izedyar said that SAO has a deadline to draft their own CPA regulations by end of December 2016 and start the implementation from next year. "Compared to Nepal, we don't have many active CSOs and there will be a problem to capacitate them to perform the task as well," said Izedyar. "We don't have our guidelines yet, but we have formed a committee to prepare the guidelines. After our Nepal visit, we will speed up the work to draft these series of consultations with key stakeholders," said Izedyar.

"Since citizens' engagement in public financial reform is within the Bank's corporate agenda, we are integrating these participatory ideas while designing new projects," said Mr. Bigyan Pradhan, Senior Operation Officer of the World Bank, Nepal.



Dr. Baikuntha Aryal, Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Finance, said the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) Secretariat has developed an action plan after an assessment of citizen engagement in the performance budget two years ago.

Mr. Kewal Prasad Bhandari, Co-ordinator at the PEFA Secretariat, said that citizens' engagement in PFM and in audit process is very important especially in creating awareness and to enhance the capacity of that people to be able to question, where each and every penny of the government expenditure is spent.

Mr Babu Ram Gautam, Deputy Auditor General at OAGN, said that the role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) can be crucial in creating pressure by dissemination through media and other outreach outlets to implement the GoN audit recommendations which is important to ensure accountability in the country's public financial management.

The OAGN have been using PRAN CSOs to help verify information while tracking of public expenditure on social security entitlements, health, as well as Dalit and girl child scholarship. The OAGN has constituted a high-level 15-member advisory committee from different fields who are providing feedback for the improvement to the audit process. In addition, the OAGN will select CSOs in 2017 through a public announcement, then after providing trainings on social accountability tools, the CSOs will be mobilized for the performance audit, as required by OAGN.

Prof. Prithvi Raj Ligal, former member of the CPA Working Group, said that it took 17 months and a series of consultations with the government partners' to finalize the draft of CPA. He said that a policy champion within OAG helped them achieve their dream of preparing a new CPA guideline and have it included it in the Audit Act. Talking about the challenges, Prof. Ligal said that an independent organization, such as the World Bank, needs to step in to support the local CSOs for the initial phase until it becomes institutionalized.

Frank Bassette, Program Manager, MDTF-PFM, said this is a good initiative of South-South collaboration and Nepal is quite advanced in terms of citizen participation in public financial management.

Gorkha Field trip to learn about the Citizens' Participatory Audit process in Nepal

A three-member team headed by Franck Bessette, Multi-Donor Trust Fund Program Manager visited Gorkha District from November 21st to 23rd, 2016 to meet with district officials to learn about the Government of Nepal's earthquake housing activities and more about the housing project's fund transfer process.

The field trip was a follow-up to the Supreme Audit Office of Afghanistan's mission to Nepal to learn about Citizens' Participatory Audit process in Nepal in general and its actual application in the field.

The team discussed the status of the World Bank -Nepal Reconstruction Authority (NRA) earthquake housing project with district officials, including the Chief District Officer (CDO), representatives of the District Treasury Controller Office and the district engineer of Department of Urban Development & Building Construction (DUDBC office).



During the meeting, it was revealed that most families affected by the 2015 earthquake and enrolled in the NRA housing project have received their first funding tranche. 1,124 houses, out of the 44,000 families enrolled in the district, are under construction; 721 have also been certified to the plinth level for reconstruction.

Narayan Bhatta, Chief District Officer (CDO) informed that earthquake-affected people do not have to follow to the 17 official housing designs. They can do their own design. However, construction should be done in consultation and certified by the NRA field engineers. Bhatta also stated that all households will receive the full Rs 300,000, as well as the Government of Nepal (GoN) will manage soft-loans up to Rs 800,000 with or without collateral.

Regarding the Disaster Management Audit Performance, a three-person Office of Auditor General in Nepal (OAG) team visited five Village Development Committees of Gorkha including Barpak, the 2015 earthquake epicenter, to conduct the post-disaster audit and review the District Disaster Preparedness Plan. The team was informed that the official GoN Disaster Management Audit Guidelines were finalized and approved by the OAG one month ago. Gorkha district will be one of the OAG's first Post Disaster Management Performance Audit, along with Nuwakot and Rasuwa districts.

Tharu women demand skill-oriented training

Thirty-two year old Sita Tharu, a mother of two, from Khairichandanpur Village Development Committee (VDC) of ward no-4 of Bardiya district, is busy advancing her sewing skills and also working hard to get approval for advance sewing trainings in the next budget.

Sita comes from a very poor background whose husband is a labor migrant in India and the money he sends home is not enough to feed the family for a year. Since she is not educated and does not have any skills, she has not been able to support her family financially.



Last year, Sita found out from the Ward Citizen Forum that VDCs have a budget allocated for the specific target groups and the fund is used to provide skill-oriented trainings as per their demand. Thus, she enrolled into the three-month free basic sewing training from VDC last year which has made her more confident. "I thought I could never earn anything," shared Tharu. "But after learning basic sewing skills, I can now sew the clothes of my neighbors." She, however, feels that she needs more training in order to take up this as a profession. Tharu is making some money by helping her trainer as well. "This is just a beginning. Even though the money is not much, this has boosted my confidence."

Tharu is paying for her additional two months course through self-payment of Rs 600 per month this year because the VDC did not have enough budget for more than three months for the 24 women from marginalized community. Tharu was one of the luckiest women to get the training. Sita became aware of the VDC target group development budget in VDC through an orientation on budget literacy program organized by the Manpur Youth Society, a non-governmental organization and a partner of Program for Accountability in Nepal (PRAN), funded by Multi-Donor Trust Fund.

According to Mrs. Shova Thapa, Coordinator of Women Coordination Committee, out of 10 percent targeted budget allocation for women, only Rs 120,000 was issued from VDC this year. "We lacked ideas, so we did not propose any activities around women's empowerment in the last year's planning and budgeting process," she said. "Compared to previous year, the women have become well aware of their rights and needs, thanks to orientations to budget literacy and program developing sessions," said Thapa. She informed that they would demand long-term skill-oriented trainings for these women so that they could start up their own businesses with little financial support from the government.

Hira Lal Sharma, VDC Secretary, said that women from various target groups have now become more aware about their rights and they know what they want from the budget allocated for them. "Earlier, the fund meant for the target group would remain unused due to lack of any programs demanded by the targeted group but now women have come forward and demanded sewing training," said Sharma. "The awareness on their part has not only changed them, but it has also made our life easy because we can now use the budget as per their needs."

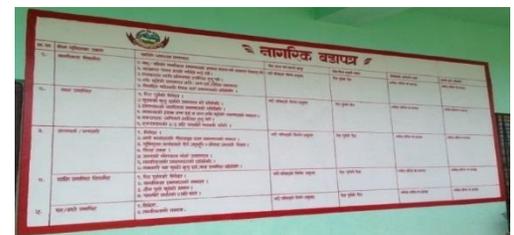
Citizen Charter starts to make impact

Dal Bahadur Sunar of ward no-9 in Banke district was very happy to get the information directly from the Citizen Charter in front of the Bankatawa Village Development Committee (VDC) secretariat. "The clear information of the Citizen Charter has encouraged me to demand services from VDC and has also reduced the unnecessary time and hassle on making a verbal inquiry from the staff," said Sunar.

Sunar sought information for the VDC budget allotted for Dalit, women and children in order to plan and demand programs for the targeted group. "This has made life much easier. Now, I can submit the program proposal and submit it to the VDC for the approval of the program," he said.



Before



After

The Citizen Charter at Bankatawa VDC secretariat was not updated for one and half year. This created so much difficulty for the local people to get information on various programs. A local non-government organization (NGO), the Human Rights Protection and Legal Service Center (HRPLSC), along with other local NGOs organized a series of

awareness programs on VDC level budget and various programs, which prompted locals to demand an updated Citizen Charter in government offices.

Deepak Poudel, VDC Secretary, acknowledged the delay in updating the Citizen Charter even though it is mandatory for local authorities to do so. Poudel said with the updated Citizen Charter, it has also helped them to keep track of the VDC activities and improve their own performance to deliver local services.

Citizen Engagement Free Open Online Course starts from Feb 7

The World Bank Group is launching its free Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on Citizen Engagement on February 7, 2017. This free 5-week social sciences course explores citizen engagement and the role citizens can play in actively shaping public policy. Interested participants can register for the course and join the conversation:

<http://bit.ly/cemoocedx> #citizensengage

The program was jointly developed by World Bank Group [Open Learning Campus \(OLC\)](#), the Citizen Engagement Secretariat, the Governance Global Practice and the Social, Urban and Rural and Resilience Global Practice, this free 5-week course is hosted by edX. It has been developed in partnership with the London School of Economics (LSE), the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), Participedia and CIVICUS.

The third offering of the popular course features practitioners implementing different Citizen Engagement approaches in various sectors including water, health, and education in Ghana and Kenya. The practitioners discuss how Citizen Engagement tools and mechanisms are adapted for their specific country context and sector while examining practical challenges and lessons learned. Throughout the course, the participants will get to learn about cutting edge research and theories related to citizen engagement, and examples of ways citizens and governments are working together in new ways to improve their societies.

Over 26,000 participants completed the course in 2015 and 2016.



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