

# प्रतिबिम्बा

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## PRAN's Announcements

This month, we bring information on the lessons learned during research carried out with local CSOs on Social Security Entitlements in 80 VDCs of ten districts in the West, Mid-west and Far West regions of Nepal.

We also offer you insight through a World Bank blog post into the approaches of SAC that need a broader strategy than limiting itself to only CSOs and communities.

**"Citizens claimed that some deductions were made to their Social Security Entitlements": Research says**

*The research undertaken by New ERA, one of PRAN's partners has identified that their Social Security Entitlements (SSEs) are not fully paid according to the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD).*

Deductions ranging from 10 to 25% have been made on SSEs at the time of disbursements, the report has found. These deductions were reportedly made by the VDC Secretary and deemed as necessary for various reasons (as per recipient conversations with the PRAN CSOs). The Resource Mobilization Guideline issued by MoFALD on SSE (noted in detail), however, makes no mention of any of these reasons as valid or permissible for either withholding SSE payments or making deductions.

The research was carried out in 80 VDCs of 10 districts from the West, Mid- West and the Far West regions.



Some of the oft-cited reasons by the VDC Secretaries as to why they allowed deductions or authorized delayed payments with the remaining payments adjusted in the next disbursement cycle were:

- To tie up SSE payments with the desired VDC's Open Defecation Free status. VDC Secretaries admitted to withholding the SSE payments or making deductions to ensure that the citizens participate in making that VDC achieve the Open Defecation Free (ODF) categorization or because the secretaries insisted upon ODF before releasing the full payments.

- For wider distribution of SSEs within the limited budget allocation. For example, citizens who are eligible for full disability SSE may be provided only the partial – so that more citizens in the latter category are covered.
- To cover costs of printing of SSE ID cards and other administrative expenses for timely SSE disbursement which may not have been budgeted for or have insufficient budget. The VDC Secretaries added that the last minute additions of citizens eligible for senior citizen SSE in the month of Asad, which is the last month of the fiscal year, forced them to take such steps after the VDC Secretary had sent in the list of eligible citizens for the next fiscal year.

The VDC Secretaries explained that it was challenging as they were expected to manage the new additions of eligible citizens within the budget earmarked earlier in the fiscal year for a lower number of citizens. Rather than face irate citizens demanding their SSE, the VDC Secretaries opted for “spreading it thin” to ensure everyone received something.

The recent research has also highlights an important lesson on the disability allowance. Citizens eligible for disability allowance were often not paid the right (full) amount, with the local authorities citing reasons of “exceeding budget or exceeding the quota for the VDC”. This, clearly, needs further attention.

Also, the absence of a grievance mechanism within the VDC, where such concerns or complaints may be lodged could be a key reason behind the non-payment. Citizens who are unable to afford repeated visits to the GoN office due to the additional costs that may be incurred due to their disability, or that their family has to bear, are less likely to be visiting the district office for placing their concerns and seeking assistance.

Another highlight of the research centered on the correct knowledge of the official registration deadlines. With limited knowledge on SSE registration deadlines, citizens may miss out on receiving their timely payments and may even have to wait for more than the mandated time period for the first payment. Citizens who missed out on the mid December registration deadline were unaware of the mid-year provision to register for SSE payments in mid June to mid July of each year. They often had to wait for up to 18 months. This resulted in citizens not receiving payments after immediate completion of the eligible age but several months after.

## Where Are We Going With Social Accountability?

*A recent governance conference **The New Directions in Governance**, hosted jointly by the World Bank and ODI, has generated various blogs on social accountability and governance. Here, we feature one of those blogs written by Joe Wales on the World Bank’s Peoples, Spaces, Deliberation blog.*

### **Enthusiasm, Confusion and a Bit of Clarity: Where Are We Going with Social Accountability?**

Joe Wales asks daunting questions on whether or not social accountability works, what we expect social accountability to achieve, and ponders a concept he refers to as naïve social accountability. At the end, Mr. Wales advocates the ‘accountability sandwich’ approach advanced by Jonathan Fox, looking at both the citizen and state angles.

The debate around social accountability is not short of energy, enthusiasm or ideas. It has gone through many phases over the last 20 years and has become increasingly sophisticated as its evidence base has grown, a trend reflected in discussions at the recent ODI-World Bank conference on “New Directions in Governance”. Despite this, progress is being held back by a

lack of clarity on some issues and a narrow focus on the demand side of accountability. This blog argues that we need to broaden our thinking beyond a focus on civil society and citizens alone to engage much more strongly and strategically with the state and its divisions, aims and capacity.

For more information please go to: <http://blogs.worldbank.org/publicsphere/enthusiasm-confusion-and-bit-clarity-where-are-we-going-social-accountability>

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