

# GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP



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PRIA GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP (PGP) IS A GLOBAL INITIATIVE ON CITIZENSHIP AND DEMOCRACY WHICH AIMS TO FOSTER KNOWLEDGE AND RELATIONSHIPS. IT STRENGTHENS AND NURTURES PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS COMMUNITIES AND COUNTRIES TO 'MAKE DEMOCRACY WORK FOR ALL CITIZENS'. IT UNDERTAKES RESEARCH, ADVOCACY AND CAPACITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES,

AND PROVIDES DEMAND-BASED ADVISORY AND CONSULTING SERVICES. THE BROAD THEMATIC AREAS OF PGP'S WORK ARE:

- DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE
- PARTICIPATION, VOICE AND SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY
- EFFECTIVE AND EMPOWERED CIVIL SOCIETY
- AGENCY FOR GENDER EQUITY
- ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

Photograph courtesy Kanak Tituri



Photograph courtesy Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay



Photograph courtesy Vikas Jha

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## From the Director's Desk

It is with great pleasure we present the inaugural issue of *Global Partnership* – an e-newsletter of PRIA Global Partnership (PGP). One of the purposes of bringing out this quarterly e-newsletter is to foster regular communications about perspectives and experiences between the PGP team and our development partners throughout the world. We share our lessons in the hope that they will be useful to you. We also hope that through *Global Partnership* we will engage in sharpening the debates on various contemporary development discourses.

In this inaugural issue we bring you some of PGP's recent experiences and the knowledge created in the process. The next issue of *Global Partnership* will focus on Democratic Accountability. Subsequent issues will focus on various themes, which are given at the end of this inaugural issue.

We look forward to your active support in sharing experiences and disseminating the newsletter to various audiences and stakeholders in the development process, and invite your contributions in order to make *Global Partnership* an effective space for deliberation and strategising civil society interventions.

Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay  
Director, PGP  
February 2011

## PERSPECTIVE

### RESURGENT ASIA?

RAJESH TANDON, PRESIDENT, PRIA

At the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, there is no longer any disagreement about the trend that the Asian region will drive global economic growth. Asian economies, individually and collectively, are growing at a rapid pace; the fulcrum of economic decision-making is moving towards the emerging Asian markets; ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) has emerged as the most dynamic regional political platform for defining global economic policy standards.

In the Asian region, six of the 20 largest economies (G20) reside; the political clout of the Asian economies in G20 can be best understood from the fact that the last G20 heads of state conclave took place in South Korea in November 2010 – a first such meeting outside North America or Europe. Regional and bilateral trade agreements within Asian countries have enabled the pace of trade to grow faster. The December 2010 visit of the Chinese Premier to India signalled much larger bilateral trade and business cooperation.

In the face of rapid economic growth there also exists the issues of inequality in the region. Inequality within all Asian countries has grown rapidly, with sections of the population still entrenched in poverty. Social and economic exclusion is further driving resentment, disaffection and conflicts.

It is within this paradox that the voice of civil society has to be mobilised and asserted in Asia. Cross-country and inter-regional engagement and solidarity within civil society in Asia had a much greater intensity in the late 1990s, though the need for the same is much higher today. Building connections, sharing strategies and lessons, enhancing solidarity and joint action, and regaining democratic space are the key challenges facing civil society in several Asian countries. Disappearing international aid has made civil society advocacy and social mobilisation in many countries of the region dependent on the vagaries of government funding and consent. Realigning institutional, political and intellectual capacities of civil society in countries within and across the region has therefore become crucially urgent.

PRIA (Society for Participatory Research in Asia) had been at the forefront of strengthening capacities and coalitions of civil society over the past three decades. It is time it redefines its strategies to address the challenges illustrated above. Democratic assertion of citizenship and claiming the rights of the excluded in the Asian region requires civil society actors like PRIA to retool itself. Global partnership initiatives of PRIA now are intended to enable it to seize such moments.

The large and populous countries of the Asian region are also witnessing a move towards greater democratic decentralisation of authority and resources in governance. New institutions and systems of local governance in these countries are opening up new spaces for citizen



Photograph courtesy Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay

participation in governance. Several practices in Right To Information, Citizen Monitoring, Participatory Planning, and others are enhancing the role of civil society in social accountability of governance institutions. However, given the historical nature of centralised political authority in old Asian cultures, bureaucratic indifference and resistance, effective devolution of decision-making at the neighbourhood and village level is yet to happen; this is where civil society engagements are beginning to make a difference. Can these practices, lessons and innovations be systematised in order to gain scale in countries of the region? Can Indian civil society learn from Indonesian experiences? How can Vietnamese officials understand the nature of local planning from Indian civil society partnering with government? Will it be valuable for Chinese women's groups to understand how poor Bangladeshi women are organising their livelihoods? Can Asian academics jointly promote community-engaged research to address the problems of environmental degradation in their societies? How can policies for investing in the federations of urban poor in India be a source of learning for Philippines and Cambodia?

In addition, it is important that the collective voice of civil society is heard by ASEAN; that UN agencies in the region systematise regional consultation mechanisms with civil society in securing its inputs in their programming; that dialogue with Asian private sector on inclusion and sustainability becomes an ongoing practice.

As Asian economic and political interests expand globally, Asian civil society also needs to act in solidarity with African and Latin American civil society. New economic groupings like BRIC, IBSA, BASIC, etc, need to be engaged with in order to ensure that they deliver their promises for inclusive growth. In so doing, trans-regional and global solidarity across civil society requires urgent attention, capacity and commitment.

These and many more such questions and issues become the basis for redefining global partnerships; the next steps will determine the journey we undertake.



## SEARCHING FOR INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS: UN—CIVIL SOCIETY DIALOGUE

VIKAS JHA, MANAGER, PGP

In the last decade, greater engagement between international organisations and civil society has been witnessed to take on the challenges of food insecurity, climate change, violation of political and human rights, and the failure of governance institutions to tackle persistent poverty, inequality and social exclusion. It is increasingly being realised by government and international agencies that the daunting challenges faced by humanity cannot be tackled in isolation and what is required is a strategic partnership between citizens, civil society and government. Platform HD2010 was one such step undertaken by the Civil Society Division in the Partnerships Bureau of UNDP, which intended to forge multifaceted partnerships between the United Nations, civil society and other actors to address the converging food, financial and climate crises.

The year 2010 was of great significance for the UN as it was the 20th anniversary of the launch of the UNDP Human Development Report (HDR), the ten-year review of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as well as the Beijing+15, and it was the right time to call all stakeholders on to a common platform to tackle multiple crises.<sup>1</sup>

In light of the above, a UN–civil society regional consultation was co-convened by Civil Society Division in the Partnerships Bureau of UNDP and Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) in Bangkok in August 2010 under the Platform HD2010 initiative. The objective of the consultation was to foster and expand ongoing debates on a citizen-centred or people’s multilateralism and revitalize UN(DP) engagement with civil society in rethinking human development and advancing the MDGs.<sup>2</sup> Both these objectives have acquired a fresh urgency in the context of the crises now known as the four ‘Fs’ – food, finance, fuel and fiscal – which call for new forms of governance at local, national and global levels.<sup>3</sup> The consultation brought together civil society representatives of national, regional and international organisations from over 15 countries and UN colleagues.

The consultation included analysis and overview of the political and development contexts in Asia-Pacific and discussions on strategies for UN–civil society engagement on innovations in searching for solutions for deficits in democratic governance, democratic space and obstacles in achievement of the MDGs. The consultation came



UN–Civil Society Meet in Bangkok, August 2010

*Photograph courtesy Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay*

forward with a set of recommendations for governments and the UN<sup>4</sup>:

- Improving policy and legal frameworks for citizen participation in local governance and enhancing citizens’ engagement with civil society support.
- Inclusion and participation of women in development and public life needs to receive greater attention by policymakers and the international community.
- MDG data is disaggregated and analyzed through the lens of the ‘3Gs’ – gender, social groups and marginalised geographical areas.
- The UN should seek opportunities to co-convene forums with civil society and should facilitate the participation of civil society representatives in national decision-making processes.
- The UN should create, foster or expand UN–civil society spaces and networks for dialogue and exchange at regional and national levels.
- Civil society organisations must look inward to ensure they have a sound organisation structure and should use ethical safeguards such as staff codes of conduct and external account auditing.
- Civil society organisations in the region should build coalitions around common agendas such as addressing the status of women and mainstreaming the participation of the marginalised in society.
- UNDP facilitated creation and maintenance of regional exchange and networks by setting up a web space/e-platforms to initiate contact.

These recommendations certainly throw up some innovative ideas about strategies of engagement between the UN and civil society for solving crises in the contemporary period.

1. Discussion Paper, ‘We the People: Towards a People’s Multilateralism’, Asia Pacific Regional UN Civil Society Consultations, Bangkok, 30-31 August 2010.

2. Ibid .

3. Summary Report, ‘Platform HD 2010: Towards a People’s Multilateralism’, Co-convened by UNDP and PRIA, Bangkok, 30-31 August 2010.

4. Ibid.

## TOWARDS BETTER GOVERNANCE THROUGH ENGAGED CITIZEN LEADERS: EXPERIENCES FROM INDIA, BRAZIL AND SOUTH AFRICA

BHAVITA VAISHNAVA, PROGRAMME OFFICER, PGP

The discourse around democracy is surrounded by myriad theories, but the one basic notion to which all of them adhere is the tenet of citizen participation and engagement. The foundations of democracy seek to patronize people's participation in governance, which can be realised by citizens through practicing citizenship and exacting accountability from the state. However, the crises and deficits of democracy are also not unknown, which have led to the surfacing of concepts like deepening democracy through active citizen participation.

Deepening democracy has been a relentless endeavour of citizens around the world. New ways of engaging with state institutions are being explored in order to create just and equitable states and societies. These trends are witnessed more in developing countries as they constantly try to unshackle the long histories of dictatorship and colonial rule and strengthen democratic political systems. Thus, the combination of democracy, participation and citizenship leads to the fulfillment of good governance through active citizens on the one hand and accountable, transparent governments on the other.

In the project 'Synthesizing Experiences in Citizen Leadership: India, Brazil and South Africa', funded by the Ford Foundation, PRIA in collaboration with the University of Western Cape, South Africa and Polis, Brazil synthesized experiences of citizen leadership from the 'new democracies' of India, Brazil and South Africa through a research study. Cases from the three countries depicting the changes brought about through citizen participation were collected and analysed from varied perspectives such as how citizen leaders/groups are capacitated by intermediary organisations, what kind of spaces are created and used, what are the dynamics of these spaces, what processes of community mobilisation



Citizen Leader in Cape Town, South Africa  
Photograph courtesy Vikas Jha

were adopted, what was the role of citizen leaders and intermediary organisations, what were the challenges encountered, what changes were brought about, and what was the nature of relationship between the state and citizens?

Case studies of participation and leadership from these countries highlight that citizens have used new democratic processes like Participatory Budgeting, Public Councils (Brazil), Citizen Report Card, Social Audit (India) and Citizen Monitoring (South Africa) in order to make the state responsive and accountable. A cadre of active citizens, known as 'citizen leaders', has mobilised citizens to use democratic processes, thereby enabling substantive participation and creating pressure for opening new spaces of participation. Citizens have practiced citizenship by acting responsibly and taking up leadership roles. They have successfully demonstrated that citizen leadership is beyond the notion of claiming citizenship rights and extends to the practice of acknowledging and performing ones responsibilities and duties towards society. The case studies also bring to light the role of intermediary organisations in strengthening the capacities of local citizens in taking on leadership roles as well as the impacts that can be witnessed through these processes.



Participatory Budgeting in Progress in Embu Municipality, Brazil

Photograph courtesy Vikas Jha

The research was aimed at capturing the diverse experiences of citizen leadership as well as the dynamics that surround this concept to create a knowledge base for different stakeholders working on this theme. The experiences of the research study are collated in *Citizen Leadership: Deepening Democratic Accountability in India, Brazil and South Africa*, a book that contains in-depth analysis of the concepts of democratic spaces, citizen leadership and voice, processes of collectivisation, and role of citizen leaders and intermediary organisations in making governance systems more effective.



# MAINSTREAMING SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN PARTICIPATORY PLANNING

KAUSTUV KANTI BANDYOPADHYAY, DIRECTOR, PRIA

In recent years participatory planning methodology has received new impetus among the practitioners of social accountability. Planning for local development has always been considered an expert-driven, top-down exercise. With the emergence of decentralised local governance in many countries, local governance institutions are now entrusted to plan, implement and deliver basic services to citizens. In this context, Affiliated Networks for Social Accountability–East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA-EAP)<sup>1</sup> approached PRIA Global Partnership to undertake a study called ‘Towards Mainstreaming Social Accountability: Mapping of Participatory Planning in East Asia’. The overall goal of the study was to explore the importance of integrating participatory planning in the Public Finance Management (PFM) cycle and making it a potential tool for social accountability. The study analysed policies, institutions and practices in Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Mongolia in the context of social accountability. Some of the findings of the study are discussed here.

## POLICIES AND INSTITUTIONS

The legal frameworks to support participatory planning are in place in most South East Asian countries but the design and enabling conditions to operationalise those frameworks vary. One of the most significant factors contributing to the institutionalisation of participatory planning is the presence of institutions with a clear mandate for facilitating, preparing and implementing participatory planning processes. Planning and Budgeting Committee (PBC) and Procurement Committee under Commune Councils in Cambodia, Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Daerah (BAPPEDA- Regional Planning Agency) and Muserembang (multi-stakeholder forum for planning) in Indonesia, and Local Development Councils in the Philippines are examples of such institutions.

## INITIATORS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Initiatives for participatory planning may be taken up by governments, civil society, or both as a joint initiative. However other stakeholders also join in at later stages and contribute to enrich the process. There are five sets of actors involved in participatory planning at all levels: (a) national government, (b) local government authorities (c) community/citizens/local associations, (d) civil society organisations, and (e) donor agencies.

## TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Several tools and techniques have been employed for local planning as well as enforcing downward accountability. These tools and techniques can be categorised into (a) need assessment tools, (b) mobilisation tools, (c) negotiation tools, and (d) monitoring tools.



Participatory Planning Exercise in Cambodia  
Photograph courtesy Vikas Jha

Need assessment tools help assess the condition of the locality, whereas mobilisation tools help organise communities in the planning process. Negotiation tools are beneficial in bringing different stakeholders on to one platform where negotiation takes place in prioritising identified needs to prepare a draft plan. On the other hand, monitoring tools help assess how projects/ programmes and activities have been implemented and with what results.

## IMPACT ON SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Participatory planning has made positive impact on strengthening and institutionalising social accountability. It has led to dissemination of information, including information on planning processes, budget allocations and assessment of previous performance. It has also set up and strengthened grievance redressal by making available a system, giving it publicity, ensuring effectiveness of that system and responsiveness of authorities in addressing registered grievances.

## ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

There are a number of challenges with regard to institutionalisation of social accountability in participatory planning process, including

- Capacity gaps
- Low participation
- Long wish list
- Weak downward accountability

## STRATEGIES

A number of strategies need to be in place in order to institutionalise social accountability mechanisms in the participatory planning process. The critical ones are:

- Improve legal frameworks
- More space and resources to CSOs
- Sensitising and capacitating concerned stakeholders
- Multi-stakeholder collaborations
- Fiscal devolution to local governments.

1. Affiliated Networks for Social Accountability–East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA- EAP) is an initiative of the World Bank and its regional secretariat is housed in the Ateneo School of Government, the Philippines.

## PGP'S CURRENT INITIATIVES

### LEARNING CENTRED PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION (PME)

The development industry spends huge resources every year to reduce poverty, exclusion, and inequity. How does one know whether such spending is actually producing the desired changes and how do such changes happen? A thoughtful application and practice of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) can provide the answers to many such questions. However, often there is enormous reluctance and at times active resistance to applying PME. PRIA for decades has been working to promote learning centred PME for both CSOs and other developmental agencies. Continuing with this effort, PGP (with support from Rockefeller Foundation) is working with some Asian affiliates of Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI) to strengthen their learning centred PME systems in India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and the Philippines. The novelty of this initiative lies in the fact that this trans-national initiative of the urban poor is designing a simple yet robust institutional learning system; this process itself is a valuable source of learning for the practitioners of PME.

Recently PRIA has also got involved in the review of Urban Poor Funds International (UPFI) of SDI, which was supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. UPFI is an international financing mechanism for urban poor to build low-cost housing by leveraging additional resources from their respective governments and influencing their policies.

PGP is also involved in Appreciating Programmatic Approach of ICCO, the Netherlands and Thematic Learning Programme of PSO, the Netherlands on PME. Partnership and Transparency Funds (PTF), supported by DFID also invited PGP to facilitate and conduct Project Completion Assessment of 12 projects on the theme of Citizen Against Corruption (CAC) implemented by Indian partners in three states of India.

### DEMOCRATIC LOCAL GOVERNANCE

In the last one and a half decades most Asian countries have embarked upon reorganising their governance structures through democratic decentralisation. A large number of CSOs have not only been active partners in promoting citizen participation, accountability and inclusion in the local governance of their respective countries but have provided capacity development support. A number of innovations have been made through numerous efforts in some of these countries. However, the lessons learned from these innovations are often not widely available to practitioners. PGP with the support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is working towards developing and strengthening coalitions of CSOs in the Asian region through creating and disseminating new knowledge, advocating policy reforms, promoting learning opportunities by convening multi-stakeholder dialogues and nurturing networking among practitioners. Towards these efforts, research studies on 'Capacity Development in Local Governance' and 'Democratic Accountability in Local Governance' have been undertaken, the findings of which will be shared in a regional conference in June 2011.

PGP as the South Asian Focal Point of Logo Link (a global network of practitioners on citizen participation in local governance) is engaged in systematisation of knowledge on the use of Right to Information and participatory planning in local governance. In addition, a regional paper on the Status of Local Governance in South Asia is also under preparation. All these publications will soon be available online.

## FROM OUR RESOURCES

- *Towards Mainstreaming Social Accountability: Mapping of Participatory Planning in East Asia*, A study conducted by PGP in partnership with ANSA-SEA, July 2010.
- *We the People: Towards People's Multilateralism*, Discussion paper presented at the Asia Pacific Regional UN-Civil Society Consultation, Bangkok, 30-31 August 2010.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### ASIAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON EFFECTIVE LOCAL GOVERNANCE: ACCOUNTABILITY, PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION

PRIA Global Partnership proposes to organise this international conference on 2-4 June 2011 in Kathmandu, Nepal. The conference will be organised with the support from SDC/LoGIn, LogoLink and Institute of Governance and Development, Nepal. The purpose of the conference is to share new initiatives, approaches and issues and challenges of local governance institution in Asian countries. It will bring together key actors viz. civil society, academic institutions/universities/research institutions and government from Asian countries. The main themes of the conference will include:

- Capacity building
- Democratic accountability and transparency
- Citizen participation
- Social inclusion

For more information log on to [www.pria.org](http://www.pria.org)

### INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E): NEW DEVELOPMENTS AND CHALLENGES

INTRAC, UK, PSO, the Netherlands and PRIA, India propose to organise this international conference on 14-16 June 2011, in the Netherlands which will examine key elements and challenges confronting the evaluation of international development, including its funding, practice and future. The purpose is to review and share new initiatives, approaches, issues and challenges to the M&E of development. The main themes of the conference will include:

- Capacity building
- Governance and accountability
- Impact
- M&E in complex contexts of social change
- The M&E of advocacy
- M&E of capacity building
- Programme evaluation in an era of results based management
- M&E of humanitarian programmes
- The design of M&E systems
- Evaluating networks, including community led networks
- Changing 'theories of change' and how it relates to M&E methods and approaches

For more information log on to [www.intrac.org](http://www.intrac.org)

### FORTHCOMING THEMES OF GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP

- Volume 1, Issue 2, April-June 2011: Democratic Accountability
- Volume 1, Issue 3, July-September 2011: Capacity Building of Local Governance Institutions
- Volume 1, Issue 4, October-December 2011: Participatory Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

### REQUEST FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Based on the different themes of the newsletter, interested individuals can share their experiences and learning with a wider audience. Contributions are invited from all readers – development practitioners, consultants, academicians, research students, etc. For information regarding article guidelines (word limit, font, reference style, etc) write to [pgp@pria.org](mailto:pgp@pria.org) mentioning the specific theme and issue for which you wish to contribute.

*Global Partnership* is the quarterly e-newsletter of PRIA Global Partnership (PGP). The aim of the newsletter is to promote discourses among the partners and to support mutual learning and sharing. Each issue of *Global Partnership* will focus on a specific theme highlighting conceptual as well as empirical experiences.

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