Practicing Social Accountability in Securing Rights and Governance for the Poor of Rural Areas in Bangladesh

- what needs to be changed?
- what is the socio-political context?
- what are the organizational capacities and resources required?
- what opportunities exist to engage government?
- who is accountable?
- how can we achieve change?
Practicing Social Accountability in Securing Rights and Governance for the Poor of Rural Areas in Bangladesh

A process documentation on best practices, results and learning

December 2016
have to be taken to achieve strong/high degree of civil society engagement and citizens' voice. Needs to be developed and has to be such that it is responsive to accountability; and secondly, effective steps care, social safety net and agriculture extension services as well as enabling access to right to information is service providers are less aware about their responsibilities, accountability and mandate towards poor and disadvantage people are not getting the satisfactory services in terms of agriculture extension services, institutions' governance, to meet the human right obligations & influencing the capacity of the community. Service promotion securing rights and governance aspects by improving the quality of local public key element for practicing social accountability by the service providers and it is assumed that the such service providers and decision-makers for pro-poor services at local level has been considered as one of the institutions, believes that democratic good governance is the only way to overcome the situation to make a pressure to the authority and people's movement can change the existing power relations. Inducement of transparency and public accountability most of these offices are inaccessible to the poor and powerless. This occurring because of the factors that include systemic corruption, limited access to public resources and lack people's rights. Limitation of local institutions in Bangladesh today has stood as a major obstacle, especially decentralized service providers are closely accountable to provide services in relation to fulfilling community challenge in relation to contribute the country's overall development indicator maintaining good governance state structure, the policy process and the dynamics of society. They revolve around the state-society competition between the winning and the losing party. The winning party takes it for granted that it has according Transparency International (Kabeer and Kabir, 2009). It is hard to find any sector without corrupt financial accounting to performance auditing and public accountability can also be observed on the Anglo-Saxon world in particular has witnessed a transformation of the traditional bookkeeping function in or making a statement to a legislative committee and if the statement is complete and authentic then the network of customerlist relationships stretching from the central state level to the village level.

1.2 From Accounting to Social Accountability: A long Walk to Equity and Justice

It's evident that representatives of LGIs, different service providers are less aware about their, entitlements from GoB service providers and thus their household efforts are many cases fail in reducing absolute monopoly over the state apparatus (Osman, 2010). A political or social system has become a norm in sake of the people since the liberation for the sensitization of public service delivery for the poor and the questionable. Duty bearers are not yet much responsive to provide services to people for those they have thus 'institutionalization' of the social accountability mechanisms is crucial for their being effective and occurring because of the factors that include systemic corruption, limited access to public resources and lack people's rights. Limitation of local institutions in Bangladesh today has stood as a major obstacle, especially decentralized service providers are closely accountable to provide services in relation to fulfilling community challenge in relation to contribute the country's overall development indicator maintaining good governance state structure, the policy process and the dynamics of society. They revolve around the state-society competition between the winning and the losing party. The winning party takes it for granted that it has according Transparency International (Kabeer and Kabir, 2009). It is hard to find any sector without corrupt financial accounting to performance auditing and public accountability can also be observed on the Anglo-Saxon world in particular has witnessed a transformation of the traditional bookkeeping function in or making a statement to a legislative committee and if the statement is complete and authentic then the network of customerlist relationships stretching from the central state level to the village level.

1.3 State, Social Accountability and Poverty Alleviation in Bangladesh: An Analysis

Over few decades, Bangladesh has been progressively developing in terms of accelerating growth and sometimes it has been found discriminatory to the interest and aspiration of the poor as vested interest.
NGO Forum for Public Health has implementing the Sensitizing the Pro-poor Service Promotion Securing Rights and Governance (SPSRG) Project to facilitate the continuation of the Mobilization process for claiming the rights. NGO Forum, in line with local level partner NGOs as well as capacity building support to ensure the project activities i.e. Formation of Citizen Groups, Activation of Mandated Committees, Knowledge, Skill and Capacity Development of Citizen’s, Networking and Collaboration and Practicing Social Accountabilities Tools.

This publication is an invaluable record for present the success and failure of social accountability tools. Case studies cannot provide specific guidance for the management of consecutive community but also provide different learning, process, responsiveness, reaction and reflection as well as satisfaction level of both demand and supply side. Authors may decide that the particular circumstances of their case study justify digression from our recommendations. The objectives of this publication is to Identifying and documenting the best practices initiated by social accountability tools intervention undertaken SPSRG Project with evidence based findings, to reach wider range of audience with necessary information that helps pro-poor service delivery mechanism on social safety net, health care, education and agriculture services.

This publication also focuses on the types of Social Accountability Tools (community score card, social audit, public hearing, participatory selection process) and approaches are being used based on effective participation of service recipients in the implementation of different events, decision making processes, practicing and promoting social accountability culture in 20 selected Unions under 3 Upazila in 3 districts; Bogra Sadar Upazila, Amtali Upazila and Sylhet Sadar Upazila under Bogra, Barguna and Sylhet District. Besides, successes found by this documentation in the creation of people’s participation and relationship building between the supply and demand sides for development of poor and marginalized people.

The initiative for documenting the best practice publication is a combined effort of all persons involved with the project working with the NGO Forum, Grameen Alo, Institute of Development Affairs –IDEA and Nazrul Smiriti Sangsad (NSS). Cooperation of project staff of implementing organizations made accomplishment of this effort easy. This reflects their commitment to the initiative. Their support and cooperation were inevitable to accomplish this type of job in a short time. They always extended their hands in support. Moreover, we would like to express our gratitude towards the MJF representatives for their assistance and wiling help of their unique abilities.

I express all my gratefulness and thanks to all.

S.M.A Rashid
Executive Director
NGO Forum for Public Health
have to be taken to achieve strong/high degree of civil society engagement and citizens’ voice. Much awaited for the greater development context. For that purpose, the state service delivery mechanism governance performance monitoring using social accountability tools in primary education, primary health initiatives will clearly bring in positive changes in the life of the pro-poor by influencing demand-responsive key element for practicing social accountability by the service providers and it is assumed that the such increasing the capacity of the civil society including marginalized groups to engage in effective dialogue with strong local government where every citizen will have access to contribution and participation for local level basic services. NGO Forum, materializing its vast working experience of working with local government decision-making process is mandatory to improve the situation. The benefit of the systems and processes considering the above aspects, pro-poor and demand responsive services is the major concern now a days. Public demand for human rights, democracy, transparency and good governance of the offices is an practice has gradually resulted to the furtherance of non-accountability, non-responsive and transparency and public accountability most of these offices are inaccessible to the poor and powerless. This The investigation aimed to generate concrete solutions for improving participation and public accountability practice has gradually resulted to the furtherance of non-accountability, non-responsive and transparency and public accountability most of these offices are inaccessible to the poor and powerless. This

Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AHI</td>
<td>Assistant Health Inspector</td>
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<tr>
<td>a2i</td>
<td>Access to Information</td>
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<td>ATEO</td>
<td>Assistant Thana Education Officer</td>
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<td>CSC</td>
<td>Community Score Card</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil society Organization</td>
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<td>CC</td>
<td>Community Clinic</td>
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<td>CCMC</td>
<td>Community Clinic Management Committee</td>
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<td>CAP</td>
<td>Community Action Plan</td>
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<td>CSG</td>
<td>Community Support Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>CHCP</td>
<td>Community Health Care Provider</td>
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<tr>
<td>DDPE</td>
<td>Deputy Director Primary Education</td>
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<td>DDAE</td>
<td>Deputy Director Agriculture Extension</td>
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<td>DDLG</td>
<td>Deputy Director local Govt.</td>
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<td>FWC</td>
<td>Family Welfare Centre</td>
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<td>FWA</td>
<td>Family Welfare Assistance</td>
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<td>FVVV</td>
<td>Family Welfare Visitor</td>
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<td>FPI</td>
<td>Family Planning Inspector</td>
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<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
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<td>GA</td>
<td>Grameen Alo</td>
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<td>GPM</td>
<td>Governance Performance Monitoring</td>
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<tr>
<td>GO</td>
<td>Government Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>HA</td>
<td>Health Assistant</td>
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<td>HI</td>
<td>Health Inspector</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDEA</td>
<td>Institution of Development Affairs-IDEA</td>
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<td>LGIs</td>
<td>Local Govt. Institutions</td>
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<td>MJF</td>
<td>Manusher Jonno Foundation</td>
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<td>NSS</td>
<td>Nazrul Smriti Sangsad</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Government Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>PTA</td>
<td>Parents Teachers Association</td>
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<td>PSP</td>
<td>Participatory Selection Process</td>
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<td>RTI</td>
<td>Right to Information</td>
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<td>SA Tools</td>
<td>Social Accountability Tools</td>
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<tr>
<td>SACMO</td>
<td>Sub Assistant Community Medical Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSN</td>
<td>Social Safety Net</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPSRG</td>
<td>Sensitizing the Pro-poor Service Promotion Securing Rights and Governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMC</td>
<td>School Management Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPO</td>
<td>Sub Partner Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEO</td>
<td>Thana Education Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>UH&amp;FWC</td>
<td>Union Health &amp; Family Welfare Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>UHFPCC</td>
<td>Union Health and Family Planning Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>UP</td>
<td>Union Parishad</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNO</td>
<td>Upazila Nirbahi Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCF</td>
<td>Union Citizen Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>UPz</td>
<td>Upazila</td>
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<tr>
<td>VGD</td>
<td>Vulnerable Group Development pazila</td>
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have to be taken to achieve strong/high degree of civil society engagement and citizens’ voice. In order to fill up the gap, enhancing the responsiveness of public institutions focusing local governance, primary education, health-care services. The reasons behind that are representatives of LGIs, different ensuring responsiveness of public institutions and to create a model for subsequent replication. Increasing the capacity of the civil society including marginalized groups to engage in effective dialogue with strong local government where every citizen will have access to contribution and participation for local level designed and followed to provide services by the service providers at different level are not serving the poor. Active involvement and participation of LGIs, CSOs, local allies & community leaders in local level imperative. Non-transparent and violet the principles of democracy and good governance. This is because of inefficiency practice has gradually resulted to the furtherance of non-accountability, non-responsive and transparency and public accountability most of these offices are inaccessible to the poor and powerless. This interventions used by development donor, government and civil society organizations. The investigation aimed to generate concrete solutions for improving participation and public accountability project. Furthermore, field analysis is conducted considering major indicators of the School Teacher, SMC, PTA, UCF and CSO members, farmers groups and community groups. The participants Information and data have been collected from three working areas. The methodology for the best practice documentation includes both qualitative and quantitative measures.
needs to be developed and has to be such that it is responsive to accountability; and secondly, effective steps need to be taken to achieve a strong/high degree of civil society engagement and citizens’ voice.

In order to fill up the gap, enhancing the responsiveness of public institutions focusing on local governance, the poor and powerless.

The experience of NGO Forum working in the rural areas suggests that, most of the rural poor and marginalized groups could not yet be reached with interventions used by development donors, government, and civil society organizations. Different case studies were analyzed, comparing different participation and social accountability at the local government level. It will also generate lessons to help guide and improve established approaches.

Focus Group Discussions, interviews, and meetings with stakeholders were conducted as part of data collection, analysis, and to prepare the report on best practice documentation of the project.

Figure: Methodology of the Enquiry

1.1 Social Accountability in Bangladesh:

Poverty reduction and socio-economic development remain the greatest challenge for the countries like Bangladesh. Poverty and challenges are worse in rural areas, and ultimately hindering the national development and poverty reduction. This has been a major challenge in relation to contribute the country's overall development indicator maintaining good governance.

The investigation aimed to generate concrete solutions for improving participation and public accountability in rural areas, and ultimately hindering the national development and poverty reduction. This has been an imperative.

1.3 State, Social Accountability and Poverty Alleviation in Bangladesh: An Analysis

Thus ‘institutionalization’ of the social accountability mechanisms is crucial for their being effective and imperative.

Transparency and public accountability most of these offices are inaccessible to the poor and powerless. This is because of inefficiency or making a statement to a legislative committee and if the statement is complete and authentic then the obligation is discharged (Peters cited in Pere and Osain, 2015). Since the late twentieth century, the obligation may be met simply by issuing an annual report..

In European continent, although the speed and scope differs. Thus social accountability today, has been a vital role for changing social superfluous practices in a democratic country if they are united and aware.

In Bangladesh, historically and semantically, accountability is closely related to accounting, in its literal sense of bookkeeping. Accountability tasked with providing oversight. This obligation may be met simply by issuing an annual report.

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People are not aware about their rights from the service providers. People can play an active role in engaging with the service providers and holding them accountable in the absence of synergy between efficient civil society and state systems.

The primary education, health care services, and social safety net are the key socio-economic development factors. But people's rights are limited in local institutions in Bangladesh today as a major obstacle, especially in line with the SDGs. Among all the working government tiers in Bangladesh, the local government and service providers towards better and sustainable services still remains one of the major challenges.

Thus, good governance through respect, protection, and fulfilling human rights. But improving the responsiveness of the state service delivery mechanism towards better and sustainable services still remains one of the major challenges.

In terms of accountability, the majority of these offices are inaccessible to the poor and powerless. This is because of inefficiency or making a statement to a legislative committee and if the statement is complete and authentic then the obligation is discharged (Peters cited in Pere and Osain, 2015). Since the late twentieth century, the obligation may be met simply by issuing an annual report.

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CONCLUSION

In the Bangladesh context, social accountability and good governance through respect, protection, and fulfilling human rights. But improving the responsiveness of the state service delivery mechanism towards better and sustainable services still remains one of the major challenges.

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在欧洲大陆，尽管速度和范围不同。因此，在民主国家，人们参加了改变社会的超级多余实践的角色。

然而，在历史和语义上，问责制与簿记有关，字面上指簿记。问责制被授予监督的义务。这种义务可能仅通过提交年度报告来履行。

人们对于服务提供者的权利并不了解。人们可以积极参与与服务提供者对话并问责他们，在有效率的民间社会和国家制度之间没有协同作用。

学术论坛在农村地区的工作表明，大多数农村贫困和边缘化群体至今尚未达到发展援助者、政府和民间社会组织所使用的技术。不同的案例研究进行了分析，比较了不同参与度和社会问责制在地方政府层面的作用。这将同时产生教训，以帮助指导和改进已经建立的方法。

焦点小组讨论、访谈和与利益相关者会议是收集、分析和准备报告的最佳实践文档项目的一部分。

图：调查方法

1.1 社会问责制在孟加拉国：

减少贫困和社会经济发展的最大挑战仍然存在，特别是在国家发展和贫困减缓方面。这是由于有效的民间社会和国家制度之间的缺乏协同作用。

在欧洲大陆，尽管速度和范围有所不同。因此，在民主国家，人们参加了改变社会的多余的实践的角色。

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在高效和覆盖范围方面，欧洲大陆国家之间存在差异。因此，社会问责制今天，是一个至关重要的角色，以改变民主国家社会的多余实践，如果它们是统一和意识到的。

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1.3 国家、社会问责制和贫困缓解在孟加拉国：分析

因此，通过尊重、保护和履行人权实现良好治理。但提高服务提供者的响应性仍然是国家发展指标的挑战之一。

有关问责制的大部分办公室对弱势群体和边缘化群体是不可访问的。这是由于效率低下或对立法委员会发表声明而使义务得到履行（Peters引自Pere和Osain，2015）。自20世纪末以来，这种义务可能仅通过提交年度报告来履行。

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学术论坛在农村地区的工作表明，大多数农村贫困和边缘化群体至今尚未达到发展援助者、政府和民间社会组织所使用的技术。不同的案例研究进行了分析，比较了不同参与度和社会问责制在地方政府层面的作用。这将同时产生教训，以帮助指导和改进已经建立的方法。

焦点小组讨论、访谈和与利益相关者会议是收集、分析和准备报告的最佳实践文档项目的一部分。

图：调查方法
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Social Accountability in Bangladesh:

Over few decades, Bangladesh has been progressively developing in terms of accelerating growth and improving the indicators of social progress. Even, the Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh ensures fundamental rights for its citizen in line with human rights perspective, and committed to ascertain good governance through respect, protect and fulfilling human rights. But improving the responsiveness of government and service providers towards better and sustainable services still remains one of the major challenge in relation to contribute the country’s overall development indicator maintaining good governance in line with the SDGs. Among all the working government tires in Bangladesh the local government and decentralized service providers are closely accountable to provide services in relation to fulfilling community people’s rights. Limitation of local institutions in Bangladesh today has stood as a major obstacle, especially in rural areas, and ultimately hindering the national development and poverty reduction. This has been occurring because of the factors that include systemic corruption, limited access to public resources and lack of democratic practices and public participation in local decision-making process.

Thus ‘institutionalization’ of the social accountability mechanisms is crucial for their being effective and sustainable in the long term to benefit the Citizens. Bangladesh is a developing country and thrived with the commitment of ensuring rights of the people of the country. But Even after four decades rights of citizen is in questionable. Duty bearers are not yet much responsive to provide services to people for those they have been assigned. On the other hand, people are not clear about their rights and services from the state. Besides that, significant numbers of laws and policies have been introduced by the Bangladesh government for the sake of the people since the liberation for the sensitization of public service delivery for the poor and the greater development as a whole. On the other hand people are not still aware about those. They do not know what services as a citizen of a sovereign state they do deserve from the state. Govt. is also trying to change the scenario but two things are dominating, one thing is that the duty bearers are not doing their jobs sincerely and another thing is that people are not aware about their rights from the service providers. People can play a vital role for changing social superfluous practices in a democratic country if they are united and aware.

1.2 From Accounting to Social Accountability: A long Walk to Equity and Justice

Historically and semantically, accountability is closely related to accounting, in its literal sense of bookkeeping. In contemporary political discourse, ‘accountability’ and ‘accountable’ no longer convey a stuffy image of bookkeeping and financial administration, but they hold strong promises of fair and equitable governance. Moreover, the accounting relationship has almost completely reversed. ‘Accountability’ does not refer to sovereigns holding their subjects to account, but to the reverse, it is the authorities themselves who are being held accountable by their citizens.

Therefore, the concept of accountability involves two distinct stages: answerability and enforcement. Answerability requires that an organization must do to satisfy its obligation and to answer for its actions. In other words, answerability refers to the obligation of the government officials to provide information about their decisions and dealings and to give an explanation to the public and those organizations of accountability tasked with providing oversight. This obligation may be met simply by issuing an annual report.
or making a statement to a legislative committee and if the statement is complete and authentic then the obligation is discharged (Peters cited in Pere and Osain, 2015). Since the late twentieth century, the Anglo-Saxon world in particular has witnessed a transformation of the traditional bookkeeping function in public administration into a much broader form of public accountability (Harlow 2002: 19). This shift from financial accounting to performance auditing and public accountability can also be observed on the European continent, although the speed and scope differs. Thus social accountability today, has been defined as an approach towards ensuring accountability that relies on civic engagement. It helps to achieve citizens’ empowerment, improved governance and higher development effectiveness. However, none of these can be achieved in the absence of synergy between efficient civil society and state system.

1.3 State, Social Accountability and Poverty Alleviation in Bangladesh: An Analysis

Social accountability initiatives are not isolated phenomena. They are closely related to the dynamics of the state structure, the policy process and the dynamics of society. They revolve around the state-society relationship. Though Bangladesh gained independence in 1971, a stable and democratic political process has not emerged. Over the last decade or so corruption in politics and administration has reached an unprecedented level. In fact, Bangladesh was ranked as the most corrupt for five consecutive years according Transparency International (Kabeer and Kabir, 2009). It is hard to find any sector without corrupt practices (IGS, 2008). In the political sphere, dysfunctional democracy is prevalent with the absence of the main opposition party in the parliamentary proceedings. Confrontation politics has replaced healthy political competition between the winning and the losing party. The winning party takes it for granted that it has absolute monopoly over the state apparatus (Osman, 2010). A political or social system has become a norm rather than an exception in running the public sphere. Public service provisions are managed through a network of customerist relationships stretching from the central state level to the village level.

1.4 Context for Urgencies of Social Accountability Practice in Bangladesh:

Poverty reduction and socio-economic development remain the greatest challenge for the countries like Bangladesh, and these constitute the key development priorities for the government. It has been evident that, most of the contacts between rural people who constitute about 80% of the total population placed at rural Upazila level, where the government functionaries including agriculture extension services, primary education, health care services and social safety net are the key socio-economic development factors. But general observation indicates that most of the deserving people/poor are not getting their service entitlements from GoB service providers and thus their household efforts are many cases fail in reducing poverty.

It’s evident that representatives of LGIs, different service providers are less aware about their responsibilities, accountability and mandate towards poor and disadvantaged, government policies and principles, etc. and there is absence of participatory planning, budgeting and monitoring, etc. These lead the mismanagement and misallocation of resources. As a result, resource goes to the well off and non-poor families most of the times. This happen due to lack of awareness of the community on their rights to information & entitlements especially on Social Safety Net, health, education and agriculture services and lack in implementation of policy & principles, less scope of interaction between LGIs, service providers, utilities & poor community and absence of self-started CBO or civil society groups.

The existing system and governance is dominated by the elite which lead to abuse of power and corruption and sometimes it has been found discriminatory to the interest and aspiration of the poor as vested interest of elites and lack of responsiveness sometimes act against the deserving population. In absence of
transparency and public accountability most of these offices are inaccessible to the poor and powerless. This practice has gradually resulted to the furtherance of non-accountability, non-responsive and non-transparent and violet the principles of democracy and good governance. This is because of inefficiency and system failure in supply sides and inadequate mobilizing vision at civil in demand side. Bottom-up pressure to the authority and people’s movement can change the existing power relations. Inducement of public demand for human rights, democracy, transparency and good governance of the offices is an imperative.

Considering the above aspects, pro-poor and demand responsive services is the major concern now a days. Active involvement and participation of LGIs, CSOs, local allies & community leaders in local level decision-making process is mandatory to improve the situation. The benefit of the systems and processes designed and followed to provide services by the service providers at different level are not serving the poor and marginalized equally and despite sincere efforts of NGOs, CSOs and local authorities including local state agencies and local government institutions, the poor and marginalized groups could not yet be reached with basic services. NGO Forum, materializing its vast working experience of working with local government institutions, believes that democratic good governance is the only way to overcome the situation to make a strong local government where every citizen will have access to contribution and participation for local level decision-making. Through different projects on Social Accountability, initiatives have been taken to mobilize and sensitize the service providers including the LGIs, local administration, service providers, CSOs, community allies and other relevant stakeholders and mobilize them on people’s rights issue and made committed in securing entitlement over the services.

Increasing the capacity of the civil society including marginalized groups to engage in effective dialogue with service providers and decision-makers for pro-poor services at local level has been considered as one of the key element for practicing social accountability by the service providers and it is assumed that the such initiatives will clearly bring in positive changes in the life of the pro-poor by influencing demand-responsive service promotion securing rights and governance aspects by improving the quality of local public institutions’ governance, to meet the human right obligations & influencing the capacity of the community. Practicing social accountability will also help expand public awareness, develop system of quality services, ensuring responsiveness of public institutions and to create a model for subsequent replication.

The experience of NGO Forum working in the rural areas suggests that, most of the rural poor and disadvantage people are not getting the satisfactory services in terms of agriculture extension services, primary education, health-care services. The reasons behind that are representatives of LGIs, different service providers are less aware about their responsibilities, accountability and mandate towards poor and disadvantaged, government policies and principles, etc. besides, there is absence of participatory planning, budgeting and monitoring, etc. These lead the mismanagement and misallocation of resources. In some cases, existing system is dominated by the vested interest of elites resulting inaccessible of services to the poor and powerless.

In order to fill up the gap, enhancing the responsiveness of public institutions focusing local governance, governance performance monitoring using social accountability tools in primary education, primary health care, social safety net and agriculture extension services as well as enabling access to right to information is much awaited for the greater development context. For that purpose, the state service delivery mechanism needs to be developed and has to be such that it is responsive to accountability; and secondly, effective steps have to be taken to achieve strong/high degree of civil society engagement and citizens’ voice.
CHAPTER 2

Methodology

The methodology for the best practice documentation includes both qualitative and quantitative measures taken for data collection, analysis and to prepare the report on best practice documentation of the project. Information and data have been collected from three working areas.

Focus Group Discussions, interviews and meeting with the stakeholders were conducted as a part of data collection from Union Parishad, Community clinic management committee, CC & FWC service holders, School Teacher, SMC, PTA, UCF and CSO members, farmers groups and community groups. The participants were selected randomly. Furthermore, field analysis is conducted considering major indicators of the project.

![Methodology of the Enquiry](image)

The investigation aimed to generate concrete solutions for improving participation and public accountability at the local government level. It will also generate lessons to help guide and improve established approaches to participation and social accountability.

Different case studies were analyzed, comparing different participation and social accountability interventions used by development donor, government and civil society organizations.
CHAPTER 3

Modeling Social Accountability for Citizen-led Measurement in Bangladesh: Experience of NGO Forum

3.1 Looking into the Accountability Trivia:

Bangladesh has made significant advances in the reduction of child mortality, increases in births attended by a skilled birth attendant, immunization coverage, and increases in child school enrolment and completion rates. These are important successes, and are integral components of the country’s move from a ‘least developed country’ to a ‘lower middle income country’. However, since the MDGs were measured based on high-level national statistics, Bangladesh’s large pockets of extreme poverty are hidden in these figures, unseen through the lens of aggregated numbers and national averages. In a country with a population the size of Bangladesh, relatively ‘small’ percentages of extreme poverty may add up to many millions of people, and dramatic disparity persists.

Looking forward to the Global Goals for Sustainable Development, Bangladesh now needs to go beyond coverage to focus on developing meaningful, high quality services, fully available to the most poor and marginalized. However, experiences suggested that, Citizen-generated data, participatory feedback, and dialogue on the quality of service delivery, can contribute to broadening our understanding of progress against the Global Goals.

Consequently, since October 2014 NGO Forum for Public Health with the support of Manusher Jonno has taken the collaborative initiative to implement a project titled Sensitizing the Pro-poor Service Promotion Securing Rights and Governance (SPSRG) under the Governance performance Monitoring (GPM) Programme, in selected Upazilas. As NGO Forum works through local partners, it has established partnership with three sub-partner IDEA, GA, NSS to implement the project activities. The Project has used tools such as Community Score Cards, Social Audits, Open Budget, Participatory Monitoring and Citizens’ Charters, to help citizens, and in particular the poor, to organize their feedback on the services they receive, and use their feedback to structure meaningful dialogue with power-holders.

3.2 Approaches for Adopting Social Accountability in the Face of Development:

NGO Forum has experience of working in the fields of governance and accountability following community empowerment approach. The Project has improved a strong linkage with the LGIs and service providers to assist them through organizing different capacity building and mobilization events, and maintaining strong network. It also encompasses, through improving responsiveness and governance in local level public institutions, monitoring their performance with the active participation of various groups, enhancing voice and capability in claiming citizen’s rights, capacity of service providing institutions and making service providing institutions more responsive.

Social accountability is the term used when citizens or CSOs engage in specific activities that hold their leaders accountable for performance and press for good governance through either vertical or diagonal accountability mechanisms. It is characterized primarily by citizens’ active involvement in government decision-making processes to ensure government fulfills its commitments and implements policies and programs accordingly. Those who engage in social accountability bring fundamental principles of good governance and democracy to life—that is, the premise that governments have an obligation to inform and explain and that they are answerable to their people for political promises, use of financial resources, and how they govern. Social
accountability is fundamentally a rights-based approach; it is predicated on the right to information, right to voice, right to organize, and right to participate in governance functions. Paired with these citizen rights is the responsibility of citizens to understand and play a proactive role in exercising these rights.

NGO Forum, in SPSRG Project under the Governance Performance Monitoring Programme of MJF, adopted major strategies including mobilization (for claiming rights) for primary beneficiaries, voice raising by support group i.e. Union Citizen Forum, Upazila Citizen Forum (CSO) and their Knowledge, Skill and Capacity Development for further practice of Social Accountability Tools and activation existing accountability mechanism through advocacy and Lobbying through networking, collaboration and interface between service providers and service recipients. Therefore, the approach is driven by social accountability rather than advocacy only.

Through ensuring social accountability framework, NGO Forum is practicing and promoting the following process:

- Ensure collective action by different groups and institutions
- Identify problems and gaps as well as learn lessons from experiences
- Open discussion to overcome limitations
- Ensure active participation and involvement of all classes of the community
- Develop unity, trust and a healthy attitude among all stakeholders
- Promote and allow the sustainability of achievements and successes

### 3.3 Practicing Social Accountability Tools for Ensuring Responsiveness of Public Institutions

Under Governance Performance Monitoring (GPM), NGO Forum has been implementing various Social Accountability Tools in different sectors i.e. primary health, primary education, agriculture extension and social safety-net (VGD) with the technical assistances from Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF). Project mainly works for creating access of poor and marginalized groups to public services by promoting accountability of the duty bearers through using different social accountability tools i.e.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Score Card (CSC)</th>
<th>Open Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Hearing</td>
<td>Citizens’ Charter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Audit</td>
<td>Suggestion box</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory Selection Process (PSP)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By practicing the tools, NGO Forum and its partners have learned that social accountability tools are necessary for crafting citizen feedback into clear, intelligible, and cumulative messages for government and service providers, particularly around issues of service quality. NGO Forum and its partners has also learnt
how to ensure that the most poor and marginalized can participate in these social accountability mechanisms, using vulnerability mapping, political economy analysis, and sophisticated targeting, to understand power dynamics and enable those without power to participate.

In the context of the Goals, these social accountability tools could be adapted to measure progress in reducing the People’s poverty and vulnerabilities, serving several critical objectives:

- To lend greater credibility to the process itself that People are organized to claim their rights and modeling the kind of inclusivity and participation.
- To develop a database of citizen-generated data that can be compared with data reported by power-holders and service providers, engendering more accountability to citizens within data collection and building in a means of triangulating information from power-holders with information from those who tend to be less powerful.
- To increase the likelihood of social accountability by the duty bearers and meaningful citizen feedback mechanisms have been shown to have a positive impact on service delivery.

Sectors Covered:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sectors Covered</th>
<th>Institutions Covered</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Primary Health</td>
<td>Agriculture Extension</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Primary Education</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Agriculture Extension</td>
<td>Community Clinic (CC)</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Social Safety Net-VGD</td>
<td>Union Health and Family Welfare Centre(UH&amp;FWC)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Union Parishad</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 4
Learning of Practicing Social Accountability Tools

4.1 Community Score Card (CSC):

The Community Score Card (CSC) is a two-way and ongoing participatory tool for assessment, planning, monitoring and evaluation of services. One of the key feature is, it’s easy to use and can be adapted into any sector where there is a service delivery scenario a citizen-driven accountability measure for the assessment, planning, monitoring and evaluation of service delivery. CSC has become internationally recognized as an effective social accountability tool for building and strengthening citizen collective action for improved service delivery. This form of monitoring can be incorporated with institutions and citizens. Community members can monitor the activities of Union Parishad and other duty bearers and assess their performance.

Through this tool, citizens not only monitor but they also become part of developing a work plan as required of community need. Primary Health, Primary education and Social safety-nets are very important issues and also sensitive to the socio-economic and socio-political aspects of Bangladesh. Irregularity, Lack of good governance and absence of accountability are the major issues that have prevailed for years. Major objectives were to apply CSC under SPSRG project as bellows:

- To assess the effectiveness of the services provided by service providing authorities
- To establish harmony with the service recipients and service providing authorities
- To cross-check whether the resources and services reach properly to the beneficiaries
- To develop work plan with the participation of service providers and recipients to take corrective measures

Steps of CSC followed under SPSRG Project:

- **Preparatory Work**
  - Permission taken from authority, orientation of community group on facilitation, involvement of local Elite/CSO/SMC/PTA/CCMC/Ward members in process

- **Input Tracking**
  - Prepare a list of resources/inputs as per the provisions i.e Elements, Manpower, Activities, Time Frame, Display information etc.

- **Performance Score by Community**
  - A performance score cared set with some selected indicators to see the result of providing services from authorities (CC, Primary School, UP-VGD program through conducting FGD with the Community Group)

- **Self-Evaluation Score by service provider**
  - Service providers also scored on the same indicators of performance score card under self-evaluation process.

- **Interface meeting and Action Plan develop**
  - Organize interface meeting in participation with both the parties of service provider and service receivers (Community People). Influential community member chaired the meeting and take control of the disputes between service providers and service receivers. Action Plan has developed based on gap analysis.

Follow-up by the both parties
Result of Community Score Card in Primary Health Services

Community score card has been found useful for monitoring the quality services of community clinic and introduce mechanisms of constructive engagement between service receivers and providers. Practice in this tools community clinic management committee and service providers took different types of plans for develop their services and infrastructure. According to the implementation of community score card in the SPSRG project, there are many experiences and lessons have been learnt. Initially it was difficult to take permission from Upazila Health Authority. The most challenging part of the CSC was convinced the both service receiver and service providers in an interface meeting to discuss performance assessment results and to establish a joint action plan based on recommendation.

A compiled experiences of CSC on Community Clinic in the project area is given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Score Service Recipient</th>
<th>Score Service Provider</th>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Clinic opening and closing time</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>- Designated persons found lack of responsibility.</td>
<td>• Designated official persons should more responsible about office time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9:00 am-3:00 pm)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Inadequate visit of UH&amp;FWA staff</td>
<td>• Need to increase number of visit by UH&amp; FWA representative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- People don't aware the time schedule</td>
<td>• Disclose the time schedule on notice board and need to inform mass people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services of Clinic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>- Service providers presence is not adequate</td>
<td>• Ensure regular presence of service providers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Lack of sufficient medicine</td>
<td>• Visit should increase by UH&amp;FWC representative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Medicine list not hanged on wall</td>
<td>• Should hang medicine stock status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Service providers behave is not satisfactory</td>
<td>• Community awareness events should taken jointly by UP, GO &amp; NGO.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Lack of referral system</td>
<td>• Ensure Citizen Charter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Lack of follow up system the referred patient</td>
<td>• Increase access to information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Refer to govt. hospital when necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Maintain referral register.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Community Clinic Management Committee</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>- Most of the members are not aware about their role &amp; responsibility</td>
<td>• All members should aware and responsible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Meeting not held regularly because members not informed about meeting time &amp; date</td>
<td>• Secretary/ Chairperson might inform at least seven days prior to the date of the meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Coordination gap between CCMC &amp; Service provider</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinics operation and management</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>- CCMC Members concept is not clear about O&amp;M</td>
<td>• In the monthly meeting action plan will develop and update/review in regularly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Poor understanding about their role &amp; responsibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Perception of CCMC, Govt. will identify and solve the problem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own fund of Clinic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>- Lack of willingness to pay fund by CCMC and service recipient</td>
<td>• A mechanism should develop to collect money i.e donation box installation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Management initiatives was inadequate</td>
<td>• Increase motivational work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide medical service to the persons with</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Most of the clinic infrastructure is not accessible to the persons with disability.</td>
<td>• Should take initiative to increase accessibility i.e prepare of ramp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disable and elderly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide medical service to pregnant women and</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Inadequate awareness session programme about child and pregnant women</td>
<td>• Community awareness initiative should taken jointly by Management committee, GO &amp; NGOs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of Safe drinking water &amp;</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tube well is non-functional</td>
<td>• Initiative should taken by CCMC and CHCP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hygienic latrine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Latrine facilities is unhygienic</td>
<td>• Keep communication with UP and UP WASH standing committee level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure electricity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lack of light and fan</td>
<td>• Should ensure light and fan and take responsibility to payment of monthly electricity bill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitting arrangement for patients.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Insufficient space compare to daily patients</td>
<td>• Initiative should taken by CCMC and CHCP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No breast feeding corner or space for lactating mother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Implementation of CSC has been successful that bringing the following advantages:
- Relationship has improved between service providers and service receivers
- Community management committee has been taken initiatives for community clinic development i.e road construction/re-construction, raised fund, sitting arrangement, breast feeding corner for lactating mother, drinking water, electricity, fan etc.
- Prepared participatory action plan based on the identified problem and distribute responsibility among all stakeholders.
- Social accountability and transparency in services provision had increased.
- Both community and users has involved in monitoring of quality of services and decision-making process.

**Bridging the Demands of community for Better Local Healthcare System**

Fatema Begum (43) has been serving as CHCP at Jangail Community Clinic, Kandigaon Union, Sylhet Sadar Upazila. On an average, 50 patients come into the clinic every day, where pregnant women, lactating mothers and children are the dominant groups. With the interventions of the project, Fatema depicted as follows,

“I used to get less number of patients earlier and also found lack of consciousness about primary health care among community people. Besides, pregnant women, children and elderly had to suffer a lot to reach this CC, as they were using bamboo made bridge. After activation of CCMC and using the recommendations of community score card, we took initiatives to collect fund and we approached UP for constructing a culvert and later on UP supported us in its construction. Now long cherished demand of my service recipients has come into reality.”

Fatema Begum also expressed that, patients are more satisfied with the services now. As the CCMC are helpful, which make easier for them to talk about CC improvement related issues. She also told, when pregnant women come to the clinic for antenatal check-ups, they receive iron-folate tablets and vitamin A supplements. Women are asked if they are experiencing any general complications, since early diagnosis of problems can avert unwanted outcomes.

Fatema ends by thanking “I would like to thank for the orientation and supportive supervision provided by SPSRG. Now we have functional CCMC with us as our guardian and I believe, our service standard has been up scaled through having self-evaluation about our self. Now, we have a positive attitude about rights.”
Reflection of Service Recipients and Service Providers

“Earlier in 2015 administration of Upazila Health did not give permission to conduct Community Score Card at CC. But a time being SPSRG Project work has been impressed and finally we gave permission to conduct CSC at community clinic. I hope this is a very important exercise to identify the gap and increase the quality of health services.”

Dr. Md. Noore Alam Shamim, Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer
Sylhet Sadar, Sylhet

“Community Clinic has earned the trust of thousands of villagers. It has become a go-to place for primary health and nutrition services.”

Abdur Jabbar Akan, Chairman of UCF, Amtali UP, Amtali Upazila, Barguna.

“Before we thought, govt institutional support is a kind for us but now we know that it’s our rights and by using this tools we can make more accountable the duty bearer.”

Courtyard leader Nur Banu Begum, Kukua Union, Amtali

“The major problem was the community clinic management committees were not active and they weren’t aware about their duty, roles and responsibility. Our concept was not clear earlier about the community clinic operation and maintenance. Our perception was, Govt. will identify the gap and solve the all problems. Now we are well informed about our role through the project initiatives i.e orientation, consultation meeting, practice community score card, citizen charter, suggestion box etc. Now our understanding is much clear about our role and responsibilities.”

Nazrul Islam, Chairman of the CCMC, Chalitabari CC, Shakharia Union, Bogra Sadar
Dastica Community Clinic started functioning in 2000 which is situated in Nungola union under Bogra Sadar Upazila. More than 4000 poor and extreme poor is living within the catchment area of the clinic. Earlier most of the time the community clinic was found locked due to damage infrastructure, insufficient medicine and irregular services. Initially Govt. officials were not interested to give the approval to work with CC. They were not willing to come to any programme organized by SPSRG project. Furthermore, local communities thought that the project would provide them financial support. Community people were not interested to go CC. Besides, CCMC members were not perform their roles and responsibilities properly.

At present, CC opening and closing time is 9am to 3pm regularly. Community people received their service in a systematic process, CCMC attended their meeting regularly and as a result strong inter personal relationship developed among duty bearers and service receivers. Citizen charter, suggestion box installation, regular community meeting and other initiatives by UCF and CCMC leads to create extra attention in the community. Furthermore, CCMC prepared a work plan and implementation all activities based on work plan i.e. fund generation from the local elite person and beneficiaries during harvesting season as well communicated with UP and collected some grants for repairing related work i.e. tube-well, tree plantation etc.

The clinic is now a source of pride for community members and a strong example for other communities seeking to upgrade and expand health care services. Changes came due to some initiatives though project i.e consultation meeting, orientation and practiced tool like community score card. CC officials were taking into consideration that these accountability and transparency activities as a model. To increase the quality of health service union citizen forum and community clinic management committee were willingly supported to develop a citizen charter and established a suggestion box.
Result of Community Score Card in Primary Education Services

A positive attitude on quality primary education is noticed among the general people, teachers, members of the management committee, guardians and elected local government officials. They all believe that there have been some positive changes in that sector after starting the initiative. Some guardians said that quality schooling and proper management are necessary for children’s education. Many guardians got the opportunity to participate actively in different stages of implementation of the Score Card. After Interface Meeting the development of the School of the project area changed the service provider’s attitude is notable manner.

Implementation of CSC in primary school has benefited as follows:

- Parents are now participating, monitoring and delivering their opinions on various school activities.
- Parents are visiting the schools, especially on the academic result announcing day
- A sense of ownership has developed among parents, through their monitoring on education, management and teacher’s role and responsibility etc.
- Due to community score card, interested local people are now taking part in various school development initiatives i.e installation of tube wells, fans and bench facilities, filled school playground, built boundary wall etc.
- A healthy relationship has been emerged among Upazila education authority, teachers and SMC.
- Enrolment rate has increased and drop-out rate has reduced significantly.
- Teachers are arriving and departing the school timely.
- Students’ attendance has increased as teachers are visiting absentee students’ houses.
- Teachers are now taking initiatives to make the classes attractive using child friendly game materials.
- Teachers are being contacted with guardians when necessary.
- National days, Annual Sports are observed effectively.
A compile experiences of CSC on primary School in the project area is given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Service Recipient</td>
<td>Service Provider</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Opening and closing time</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Attendance of teacher is regular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Use of education materials</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>Teachers are not use education materials properly and regularly to attract the children in the class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Meeting of School Management Committee</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>SMC meeting were not held regularly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Overall Environment</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>Presently there is no initiative for beatification, developing play ground and lack of child friendly environment in school compound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Regular home visit</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>Teacher and SMC members not taken initiative for home visit of irregular students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Parents Teacher Association meeting</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>Teacher and SMC members not taken initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Results publication</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>Results were not published in presence of parents, PTA and SMC members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Cleanliness</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>Poor cleanliness of class room and toilet facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Gathering of Mother</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>Teacher and SMC members not taken initiative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Atharogashia Family Welfare Center (FWC) is situated at 50 km away from Barguna district and 25 km from Sylhet Sadar, Sylhet. Communities thought that the project would provide them with a place to cultivate vegetable and that, from where they can get good seed and how they can prepare their land for cultivation, which is very necessary for them. In the rainy season, some of them started to cultivate vegetable at the adjacent of their house but due to limited farmer and lack of basic knowledge to cultivation considering the climate, they were unable to do so. Thus, they started to use expensive chemical pesticide according to neighbor's suggestion, which not only increased their cost but also had negative effects on the vegetable. Knowledge, which I have received, is worthier than any expensive chemical pesticide.

The Uttar-Poshchim Chotolikgonj government primary school, Amtali Union, Amtali Upazila, Barguna, was one of the schools under SPSRG project. Earlier, the SMC and PTA committee of the school was not active and not aware about their role & responsibilities. They did not attend in their regular meeting, no meeting resolution was found when started the project. Moreover, presences of the teachers were not up to the mark, lack of awareness of guardians, and lack of sitting arrangement. The Headmaster of the school took initiatives i.e organized regular meeting with minutes, ensuring teacher’s presence in timely and communicated with UP for the implementation of the plan. As a result, they got 10 pair of table & benches for the school from the UP budget. Now most of the students attend school regularly. Due to such type of initiatives the percentage of attendance has increased in the schools. One regular student depicted as below-

“We had to stand or share long hours in school earlier due to crisis of our sitting arrangement. But now, we have comfortable arrangement to attend school regularly and enjoying the class”
Khalpar Govt. Primary School, Mogolgaon Union, Sylhet Sadar Upazila says “We had learnt from SPSRG Project how to mobilize towards development, as a result school got 1.5 lakh taka from different sources of UP and Elite person for filling the school playground which was filled of water logging during the raining season. SMC members were reformed when SPSRG Project was started in 2015, now SMC members meet regularly for improvement of the School. As well as they arranged electricity and fan for the children resulting children’s are eagerly coming into the school. In addition, behavior of teachers is child friendly and cultural environment is very encouraging in our school. As a result, absenteeism and drop out has reduced significantly.”

“Khalpar school has became a role model, each school can be practiced community score card for prepare a school development plan like this Khalpar Primary School.”

Mr. Mohiuddin Ahmed, Upazila Education Officer
Sylhet Sadar Upazila, Sylhet

“Now we are able to ensure 100% enrolment specially Interface meeting help to prepare an action plan for school development and we are committed to achieve the plan. Besides, we need to give emphasis to visit at school by ATEO, SMC and PTA members in regular basis.”

Mr Jahedul Islam, Upazila Education Officer, Amtali Upazila, Barguna

“Check and balance System is important. Parents also have to know school opening and closing time. School environment is very important to reduce students drop out reduction and absenteeism; also we are now aware on child marriage.”

Abul Kalam Azad, SMC members, Chalita Bari School, Bogra Sadar
4.2 Practicing Citizens Charter:

Citizens Charter is one of the vital tools of social accountability, which is used widely by the public service sector to inform the citizens about details of their services. Citizen’s Charter is a written, voluntary declaration by service providers about service standards, choice, accessibility, non-discrimination, transparency and accountability. Therefore, it is a useful way of defining for the customers, the nature of service provision and explicit standards of service delivery.

Under the SPSRG Project, Citizen’s charter was undertaken as one of the primary social accountability tools for receiving qualitative service against each institution. As it is the expression of an understanding between the citizen and the public service provider about the quantity and quality of services received in exchange for their taxes. Major objectives for promoting Citizens Charter are:

- People know about services and service charge
- Peoples claim information and service to proper designated person
- Service providers can’t claim extra fee against service
- People know about the service receiving time

SPSRG project established citizen charter in different institutions i.e Union Parishad, Community Clinic, Family Welfare Centre, UPz Agriculture Extension Office, UPz Education Office and UPz Health complex.

Major Steps were followed such as:
1. Receive permission from authority
2. Collected necessary information from UP/CHCP/FWV/SACMO/TEO
3. Prepared a draft design and sent to respective institutions to check the information
4. Incorporation of feedback final design sent to respective institutions for finalization
5. Selection of hanging location with the discussion of authority

The major CCs services were set for the Citizen charter earlier as bellows:

Family planning services:
- Provide diet pill
- Contraceptive injection
- Recommendation on family planning service.
- IUD Coparide (Specific Center)
- Vasectomy/NSV (Specific Center)
- Tubectomi (Specific Center)
- ECP
- Provide service to the use of family planning methods.

Mother and Child care service:
- Pregnant service.
- Maternal services.
- Newborn services.
- Reproductive diseases services.
- Adolescent services.
- Nutrition services.
- Health education services.

Photo: Citizen Charter stablished at Hatkhola UP
It was found that the major UPs services were set for the Citizen charter earlier as bellows:

- Legacy certificate, Birth and death certificate, Cattle right certificate fees.
- Sanitation and public health.
- Transport and communication, agriculture and irrigation, sport and culture, education and religious sectors wise implementation of development project.
- National and character certificate.
- General and Universal information.
- Union Parishad holding tax.
- Business and tread license.
- Renewal papers (Big or Small business, institution, by cycle, wheelbarrow, Driving license)
- Village court and Muslim family court.
- VGD selection.
- VGF and contents relief.
- Social safety net program (Old age allowance, Widow Allowance and Maternity allowance).
- TR, Kabikhah and other development activities.
- Employment program for the ultra poor.
- Union digital center activities.

**Practical Challenge of Utilizing Citizen Charter as Tool for Promoting Social Accountability:**

Thought citizen charter displayed in front of the selected offices, however, most of the service receivers have not adequate knowledge yet about citizen charter and services, and they have no enough knowledge about their rights and services especially for services. Therefore, they have limited voice for receiving service adequately, timely, and properly. On the other hand, service providers are almost aware about this, but they are less careful to provide services transparently and promptly. They act like the principal instead of the agent. Therefore, if citizens’ charter is not institutionalized, it will be showing just like a calendar on the wall instead of an instrument of social accountability. Thus, the aim of citizen engagement in public service through citizens’ charter may not be ensured due to lack of consciousness of citizens and inadequate publicity about citizen charter are the main reasons of failure to ensure social accountability and better service delivery in the selected areas, which has identified by the field realities. Thus SPSRG project considered that modern societies require efficient and responsive public services and a responsive civil service culture and these agencies must learn to react to public needs and consumer choice. So, emphasis was given on service providers and recipients end so that, service delivery commitments laid out on paper are employed more broadly to measure actual performances against commitments made.
People of Baruipara Get Expected Result

Baruipara, a village located at Sakaria union in Bogra District. Among 200 households, most of the people are poor and leads their life by undertaking agriculture work. They didn’t know how to claim and achieve their rights. People were unconscious about raising their voice for any kind of service. Due to broken and potholed roads in rainy season, people and children’s had to face difficulty to go to the school and other places in order to collect/ arrange the livelihoods requirements. Especially children, aged person and parents couldn’t go to the school easily. Community people took initiative to reconstruct the 250 meters road but insufficient budget was a barrier to do this. Though UP Chairman was committed to repair the road but he couldn’t do this due to insufficient allocation of budget.

Under SPSRG project, the project staffs facilitated social accountability tools i.e public hearing, suggestion box and citizen charter, as well as organized different orientation, meeting, awareness raising session and tea stall session. Now a day’s the community people are becoming more conscious about their rights. They made a decision with the help of UCF member to submit their demand in a written format. Based on this decision they submitted their required query in this suggestion box. Besides, UCF Member invited the UP Chairman to attend their regular quarterly meeting. They opened the suggestion box in front of chairman and presented communities problematic issues. The communities requirement were road repairing, prepare culvert and drain in certain place at Baruipara union, install a speed breaker in Ananda Bazar road, distribute playing materials for student etc.

Moreover, UCF member discussed about the problem in CSO forum meeting consistently. After that Union citizen forum member and community people jointly maintain an effective communication with UP Chairman and secretary. After physical verification with the UP member and community people, UP chairman gave his word to allocate budget for making culvert and road with drainage system.

Finally, one lac taka was allocated for 250 meters road from LGSP and other sources of Union Parishad. Apart from this, Union Parishad Chairman promised to community people that he will work for others development of Union Parishad.
Sanowara Begum (30), Hazardighi Village, Nungola Union, Bogra Sadar Upazila, being a housewife she also involves in agriculture with her husband. According to her desire she started to cultivate vegetable at the adjacent of her house but did not produce as her expectation due to insect affected. She used expensive chemical pesticide according to neighbor suggestion which was not so effective.

She was much inspired by the citizen charter placed at local SAAO office. She realized and knew what opportunities exist in front of her which she did not know. Through consultation meeting and public hearing she came to know that, a Sub Assistant Agriculture Officer (SAAO) is assign at Union Parishad to provide any kind of suggestion related to agriculture. An effective communication with SAAO made an unbelievable success in her vegetable cultivation. Now she is very much aware on use of pesticide and fertilizer. Not only that, from where they can get good seed and how they can prepare their land for cultivation, which is very much profitable for them and many more. Last year, she cultivated Brinjal as a combined cultivation approach with her neighbor and relatives and involved in collecting high quality seeds, prepare land, use pesticide and fertilizer, harvesting and at last took it to market. As a result in a minimum cost they profited maximum. To see their profit many of her neighbors follow and for this regards they took suggestion from her.

With the advice of SAAO, Sanowara started “Planting rows” first time. To observe the growth of plant Sanowara expecting comparatively more production from the previous. Sanowara got an agriculture loan with the help of SAAO and she also assist to her neighbors to get such loan. Though SPSRG project did not provide any grants or seeds-fertilizer-pesticide to Sanowara but she is very happy, she described-

“The project has opened my eyes and let me believe that Knowledge, which I have received, is worthier than any other thing or like material inputs. I dream of learning more to spread my acquired knowledge to help others in changing their life.”
4.3 Practicing Social Audit:

The purpose of the social audit is to improve the implementation of schemes, so that the process becomes more effective, efficient and transparent and the benefits reach the larger community. It takes minimum 2 months to complete a social audit in which Social Audit Committee (local leaders emerged from community mobilization process), and Union Citizen Forums (project supported community group who engages in democratic dialogue with UP for interest of poor and marginalized), local government representatives, scheme supervision and ward committee members, journalists and a large number of citizens participate.

NGO Forum practiced the social audit process under SPSRG project covered Health issues including the management of responsibility, finances, record keeping, access to information, accountability, levels of public involvement and so forth. It seeks to evaluate how well public resources are being used and how to improve performance. Project has ensured this participatory evaluation of the value of development interventions which involves all stakeholders especially the union level forum, FWC, CC committees, beneficiaries, local government bodies/relevant public agencies. The process entails assessing the actions, objectives and assumptions against which an intervention has been initiated with the aim of providing positive feedback and refocus in the course of an action especially where clarity may not be very obvious. In addition, social audit findings were used for positive advocacy and not fault finding. Social audit build positive relationships between service providers or managers of public development and the users of those services with the aim of improving and accountability of service delivery.

Process followed in Social Auditing:

Under the SPSRG project, at the initial level, documents and records were assessed including the terms and conditions of the institution, citizen charter, medicine chart, display board, duty roaster, fund management and transparency of record keeping. After that, the accessibility and accountability has measured as stated in the documents, the quality and quantity is verified, the public view on the quality of service is taken and the effectiveness is assessed by the users. At the end of the day an inter-phase meeting is called, and findings are presented to representatives of CC, FWC & UP in presence of the stated participants. Moreover, the project strives to allow the wider community to play an active role in social accountability mechanisms to ensure inclusive democratic processes, equal access to quality services and access to accurate information at all levels of Citizens’.

Steps were followed as below:

- **Preparatory work**
  - Form a social audit committee involving all relevant stakeholders. Provide orientation on process and objectives. Permission seeks from local authority i.e. Upazila Health, UNO, UP to implement social audit in CC and FWC. A checklist prepared by committee in consultation with CC, FWC representatives.

- **Information gathering**
  - Committee collects required information and data from the institutions as well as service recipients. The purpose of information gathering stage is to obtain records for the social audit.

- **Analysis and verification of information**
  - Collected information, data, related records are analyzed and verified. Collected information is consolidated and makes a simple presentation so that larger community can understand by the committee with assistance from SPSRG project staff.

- **Interface Meeting**
  - Social Audit committee takes necessary action to ensure a meeting and participation of service providers and citizens as possible. In the meeting all observation, findings of the audit share by committee. Service providers also have shared their limitations and committed to overcome the problem which reflects the results of local development.

- **Action Plan**
  - Both parties have reached a common consensus based on the gap need to prepare an action plan. To achieve the plan decision is taken that continuously follow-up need by the citizen, relevant stakeholders and service providers.
Experiences of Social Audit in Union Health & Family Welfare Centers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Major Findings (some cases)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountability of Health Service Providers</td>
<td>• People come to FWC from long distance (some cases 6 km) but do not get sufficient services due to insufficient medicine and irregular presence of SACMO, FWV, FWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Time management is not satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Service providers are not always present at regular basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Service providers behave is not satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency of services</td>
<td>• Medicine list is not hanged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Medicines distribution way is not transparent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Patient register, daily medicine register is not updated and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No register for referral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Citizen charter not found hanged in wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Information not disclosed properly about free medicine and financial support for birth control method by Govt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Duty roster not hanged in wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Services</td>
<td>• Primary health check-up is irregular due to medical instrument is not functioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Monitoring is not sufficient from Upazila Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reproductive health related information and services is not sufficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment of FWC</td>
<td>• Child delivery room is not clean and delivery hampered due to interrupted of electricity connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• aware enough to keep clean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Not ensured safe drinking water and functional hygienic latrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Inadequate space for sitting arrangement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Services information</td>
<td>• More than 30% people are not informed about FWC activities, reproductive health services as well as free health services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Community is not well known about child delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• People are not well informed about financial support for birth control method by Govt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FWC management Committee</td>
<td>• Meeting not held regularly and participation is poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Meeting regulation not updated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results of Social Audit are mentioned as bellows:

- Most of the people of the catchment area of FWC are well-known about the services of FWC and know the rights claiming process.
- FWC management committees are trying to meet regularly and check medicine list and staffs maintain duty roster.
- FWC officials become accountable about services.
- Attitude of service providers are more positive.
- Citizens’ are now well-known about their (Service Providers) limitations and free from the wrong concept about service providers.
- Increase daily patient at FWC
- Citizens Charter, Duty Roaster, Medicine list are hanged
Citizens Can Also Held the Duty Bearer More Accountable

Atharogashia Family Welfare Center (FWC) is situated at 50 km away from Barguna district and 25 km from Amtali Upazila with an approximate population is 22,500. This primary health centre would be very helpful for citizen’s but community people had not sufficient information about the services of FWC. Most of the time FWC was found locked and SACMO was not available there. As a result, people; especially pregnant women, children and oldest persons had to suffer a lot. Service providers did not play any role to activate the FWC. Besides, community people had lack of knowledge regarding rights claiming process.

SPSRG project has facilitated using Social accountability tools (i.e social audit, citizen’s charter, public hearing, and suggestion box etc.) so that the citizens could be more aware for the rights in order to their development. The social audit team has identified some important indicators from the qualitative and quantitative standards on health services of FWC. For each indicator the team has taken opinions from the beneficiaries about satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the service with reasons and explanations. Next, an interface meeting was organized and all the service related observations were presented by social audit team. Mr. Harun Ur Rashid, Chairman Atharogashia Union chaired in that meeting and in addition, Upazila Medical Officer, SACMO, FWA, FWV, FPI, AHI, CSO members and community were present.

In this meeting, service providers also have shared their limitations and committed to overcome the problem and therefore service provider and Citizen both parties have reached a common consensus based on the gap need to prepare an action plan. The concerned authority of FWC has committed to take steps for getting approval of the higher authority of Upazila Health.

Now, on average 60 - 75 patients come to this FWC daily. In accordance with their attitude of service providers are more positive as well community people also understand about the limitations. Service providers are motivated to take initiative to start delivery of pregnant mother. SACMO is staying now in FWC Quarter regularly. To celebrate the changes of the service delivery mechanism of FWC.

Nur Banu Begum, and leader of the primary group said that

“We used to believe that Govt. support from the service delivery institutions is a form of kindness to poor like us but now we know that it’s our rights and we have the right to claim the proper service and also contribute to hold the service providers more accountable.”
Reflection of Service Recipients and Service Holders

“I encourage to take initiative such a governance project and requesting to all community people to inform him any irregularity in any level of authority.”

Mr. Mizanur Rahman, UNO, Amtali Upazila, Barguna

“Schools make impressive relationship between both parties of supply and demand side. (Service delivery and recipients) have to continue this practice to ensure accountability and transparency of service delivery system.”

Sahidur Islam Khan, Deputy Director, Social Welfare Bogra

“People of our country are now more aware and our country is developing day by day and NGOs are playing a vital role. He gave a word to help for a smooth implementation of any kind of project. He believes that development is not possible if Government and NGO’s are not work together. We believe, NGO should work for not only VGD programme but also others Safety -Net Programme.”

Sahidur Islam Khan, Deputy Director, Social Welfare Bogra

“We know that education is free for all but we found some of schools were charged money against different services which is free. Now we are confident enough how to raise voice and stop the malpractices.”

Md. Gias Uddin, CSO member, Sylhet Sadar Upazila

“In Tultikar Union, Sylhet Sadar Upazila, it is difficult to get land for exhibition plot due to limited farmer and lack of basic knowledge to cultivation considering the favorable land. So, advice from any technical person is the best way for any kind of development. Community cultivation approach can be an effective way for Sylhet Sadar Upazila.”

Ms. Kamrun Nahar, SAAO, Sylhet Sadar Upazila

“Now we farmers are well known about the responsibility of SAAO through the SPSRG Project, now SAAO is coming to us one day at our village and available two days at Union Parishad. Not only that also we are able to direct communicate with SAAO over phone.”

Nasir Hawladar, Farmer’s group member, Barguna
4.4 Public Hearing

Public Hearing has been gradually becoming more popular due to large gatherings of the entire community/stakeholders in the presence of the accountable body representatives demanding accountability and answers from them. Public hearings are backed by hard evidence collected as part of social audits. Questions are then put to the representatives on the discrepancies and deficits between entitlements and actual services. Large scale corruption issues are brought to the fore-front. It is a very effective campaign tool for effective and accountable local governance. As a Social Accountability tool, Public Hearing has been used in order to improve quality of service of the institution through ensuring accountability, transparency and responsiveness of service providers.

Objectives of Public Hearing

- To ensure transparency and accountability of the concerned service providing institutions.
- To improve quality of services based on local demand
- To motivate the people for acting responsibly to receive services from respective institutions.

Public Hearing is being implemented through broader participation of community, Institutional authorities, local leaders, civil society, and govt. officials.

Communicate to the head of the institutions and finalization of schedule, time, date and place.

Invite all the participants by letter/phone/announcement

Organize the event with the respective authority and community people with maximum participation

Debriefing of present situation of service i.e quality, problems, performance, environment etc. by chairperson

Interactive dialogue: service users asking their question and placing opinion and to get quality service. On the other hand the Service Providers putting answer against the questions. A detail discussion has taken place in improving the services.

Based upon the discussion and dialogue an action plan developed in the end of the session. Then the Action Plan has been hanged in to the respective institution.

Handling Rough Situation and Crisis:

Public hearings can get very heated, since a lot of corruption is exposed and the representatives (legislators, village officials etc.) can get very defensive. Even the people’s outbursts can get very explosive. The facilitator needs to pacify both groups in a cool manner.

Thus, ensuring presence of key people at the inter-face meeting, both from the community and the accountable body need to be present for answers. It is also important to ensure the presence of the media(both for ensuring the presence of the accountable body representatives and also to report on the hearing.)
Result of Public Hearing:

- Community in the process of being capacitated for assessing services they receive from respective institutions.
- Trustworthy relationship between service providers and service recipients established.
- The Service providers are becoming more responsible in terms of in-time presence, distribution of medicine, comparatively appropriate selection of VGD beneficiary, farmers group visit by SAAO and providing prescription regularly.
- Sense of ownership of community developed.
- People are able to know necessary information on services, role of concerned authority and availability.
- The level of participation has increased i.e people are able to query the expenditure of UP budget.
- In some cases irregularities have become clear to people and clear understanding about the limitations of service provider.

Proper Linkage and Improved Livelihood

Though the location of Tultikor Union Parishad is adjacent of Sylhet City Corporation, yet limited agricultural land found for cultivation. That was the one reason for less involvement of Sub Assistant Agriculture Officer (SAAO) in this Union. Though farmers of this Union were very much interested to cultivate vegetable due to demand of vegetable is very high at local market. In 2014, Farmers Group was formed under the project and they got opportunity to meet with Sub-Assistant Agriculture Officer (SAAO) in the consultation meeting. Besides public hearing also organized where a detail discussion has took place in improving the services. Farmers were wanted to know about vegetable production, various agricultural new technology and methods of cultivation.

Consequently, project had tried to increase the involvement the farmers several times in different trainings in Upazila extension office. Upazila Agriculture Office provides relevant support in collaboration with SAAO when they realized about their accountability. Upazila Agriculture Officer plays a key role to create a very good relationship between farmers committee and the Agriculture Extension Officer. The project has facilitated the farmers to receive different Agricultural support from the extension department. Previously where Tultikor Union was out of list for allocation of exhibition plot from Upazila Agriculture Extension Office due to absence of farmers, now this union has been selected for allocate exhibition plot regularly. After soil testing SAAO suggested the farmers to cultivate vegetable, especially soil is favorable for bitter gourd (Korolla). Considering the favorable land and basic knowledge for cultivation Md. Samsuddin had been selected and Upazila Agricultural Extension Office agreed to provide support for an exhibition land.

For this purpose Upazila Extension Office provided a 04 day long training on the vegetable cultivation. The Upazila Agriculture Office provided seeds, fertilizer and Tk 2,100 to Md. Smasuddin after completion of training. He shared the knowledge with other members and discussed about the issue with all.

Now Samsuddin is known as a profound vegetable farmer of his Union. Now people of Tultikor Union realized that, cultivation mean not only rice production, it is possible to earn from vegetable cultivation within a small land. Financial support is not always important, necessary suggestion can play a vital role in agriculture.
Reflection of Service Recipients in Agriculture sector

Nur Hosain Haoladar, UCF member, Athrogachiya Union says “last couple of years he failed to make profit from his agriculture and most of the farmers of the village were frustrated and they didn’t get enough return according to expenses.” We tried to communicate with Sub Assistant Agriculture Officer (SAAO) but most of the time SAAO stayed in Upazila. Also we didn’t know who was responsible as Sub Assistant Agriculture Officer (SAAO) in their locality. As well as there was no sitting arrangement for SAAO at union level. After involvement of the project SPSRG and participated different events i.e public hearing, consultation meeting we pointed out our problem towards service provider and as a result now SAAO visited to the up regularly, every farmer knows his phone number and able to communicate continuously with him without hesitation. By getting this service we are improving our livelihood.”

Md. Delwar Hossain (farmer), Lives Gokul Union at Bogra Sadar. From his forefather his family is depending on agriculture and his thought was it would be easy to live. But gradually increase the price of fertilizer and pesticide and irrigation cost made it difficult. Very often he has fallen in loss for cultivation and he sink into debt. Few years ago he invested more than eighty thousand taka to cultivated Tomato in three bigha land in combined cultivation. Production was not bad but market price was so low that he could not get the production cost. He sold Tomato only thirty thousand taka.

Last year, he joined as a member of farmer group at Gokul UP. After join in the group he learned a lot, he came to know that an agriculture officer (SAAO) is assign and anybody can take suggestions from SAAO related to agricultural issues. SPSRG project staffs arranged a public hearing program where SAAO was present. Duty and responsibilities of SAAO were discussed in this meeting. What services they can get from SAAO and how, were described in this public hearing, which most of them were unknown to them. SAAO committed to visit there agricultural land regularly and provide necessary suggestions. They became aware through this process.

Within few months situation have been changed. Now SAAO is very friendly with them. They can get suggestion on use of fertilizer and pesticide, pheromone trap as many more well modern agriculture innovation. They can taste soil and use high yield seeds easily. Production cost of cultivation became decrease and they started to get benefit. Now Gokul Bazaar became a center of vegetable market. They requested to all to make a market channel so that they can send their vegetables in Dhaka City.
4.5 Participatory Budget Making Process (Open Budget):

Insufficient information makes it challenging for Bangladeshi citizens to hold the government accountable for its management of public money. Thus Participatory Budget is another important weapon of engaging citizen in policy issues and development of a country as well as ensuring social accountability of government. Union Parishad, the lowest tire of the Administrative Unit of Bangladesh is supposed to organize an open budget sessions to share the budget proposal and its allocation for different activities with the people living in the Union before finalizing the budget for the next year as per the UP Act 2009.

However, usually the UPs do not organize such type of session; thus, the community participation is missing somehow. Following the project activities a major event is to motivate the UP to organize an open budget sessions for the community, especially for ensuring the allocation for sectors like health, education, social safety net is increased and let the people know the allocation and UPs further execution plan.

“Participation of the beneficiaries of development efforts as stakeholders make the budget more appropriate, transparent, accountable and effective. Participatory and open budget, budget tracking and monitoring with the participation of the service recipients are key elements in the buildup as well as follow-up on the Implementation Plan.” (TIB, 2012).

Functions of Union Parishad for Participatory Open Budget:

The UP Act 2009 has rightly recognized the importance of community participation, transparency and accountability by including specific sections on formation of ward committees, participatory planning, access to information, and extended authority of the Standing Committee etc. Preparing or formulating budget is an important compulsory function of UP and in accordance with the UP Act 2009, Union Parishad needs to prepare and submit its budget before 60 days of the new fiscal year. UP is also responsible to formulate the budget by seeing the overall development of UP. Progress, development, income from tax sector, features of development project etc. everything depends on UP budget. In a word, budget plays an important role to achieve goals of UP and to fulfill the programmes of UP.

The Union Parishad also has a mandate to implement the function of UP properly and to achieve desired goals of UP. Budget of UP may be implemented by following ways-(1) By standing committees on various affairs, (2) By project monitoring committees, (3) By project implementation committees, (4) By proper expense of allocated finance in proper sector, (5) UP will implement budget according to its rules so that it can make a surplus after the year. The intervention of the SPSRG project, the UPs thought of this activity just as to share the budget with some selected people, let alone reviewing this. The scenario has changed these days; the UP is now aware about the importance of citizens’ participation, their opinion on the review budget and accommodate their opinion to finalize the UP’s fiscal year’s budget.
Progresses to Participatory Open Budget Under SPSRG Project:

Under the project, open budget has been organized in 20 unions where citizens got the opportunity to know about the plans of public financing. People from the project areas also participated in the review budget meeting and expressed their opinion and provided constructive feedbacks.

Over the two financial years, selected UPs have made progresses and some institutional learning have been accumulated. However those do give testimony that genuine decentralization has been achieved and installed. By devising the institutional arrangements for Public-Private interfacing, the project has helped to bridge the LG-community gap, and the LG-line department gap. Besides by enhancing and improving the interest and capacity of local community in planning process by ensuring that it goes beyond participatory needs assessment and takes into account more “technical” aspects, such as appraisal, design and costing, etc.

Open Budget has been found effective from the context that-
- Developing demand-driven mechanisms for capacity-building and thus placing LGs firmly in the “driving seat”;
- Providing local citizens with access to information about LG resources and decisions through comprehensive communications strategies;
- Identifying / devising strategies / approaches / innovations for further strengthening of local government by establishing vertical and horizontal linkages to ensure a balanced development;

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<th>Name of the Areas</th>
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<td>2014-15</td>
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<td>Sylhet (Sadar Upazila)</td>
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“Shakharia Union Parishad, Bogra Sadar Upazila have been one of the front runner since the SPSRG project started its journey. This union has been one of the union, where we have only 2 new member elected in the last election out of 13 members. We believe, this is due to our respect and care for the citizens and they have repaid back their gratitude, by electing us as their representative. SPSRG Project has helped us a lot to be more responsive to the citizen and helping us to become more people’s interested oriented”, Abu Sufian Shafiq (43), Chairman of Shakharia Union Parishad told.

He also informed that, in earlier terms, most of the UP budgets were channelized as per the will of UP chairman but after the project intervention, they have a strong Standing Committee who knows about the process and the project has contributed a lot towards their capacity building. Based on the success of social accountability interventions, we have been inspired to organize ward shava at each of the wards to incorporate those into UP’s budget. However, on behalf of the UP, we also have organized UP open Tax fair and we are doing these to fulfill our commitment with the UPs Five Year Plan.

Based on the sharing of open budget, Shakharia Union Parishad carefully incorporated demands raised by the community clinic and the reflection and allocations were made under the budget. UP Secretary described it elaborately to the citizens followed by the open discussion where Chairman interacted with the citizens and answered different questions.

“I am so impressed by this open budget process which is now completed, meeting all legal compliances and by respecting the values of citizens’ opinion. I couldn’t believe that the UP open budget meeting could be turned into such a festive occasion. It changed my mind set and from now on, I am hopeful to continue UP open budget every year with the direct involvement of citizens and transform our UP into a model one as per our strategic vision where democratic local governance would be practiced and wellbeing of the citizens will be reflected.”

Abu Sufian Shafiq (43), also told that citizens also advised UP to continue this initiative in the future to fulfill their development dreams and they are now inspired considering that the participatory budgeting is the tool that can finally solve any issue once it is there. Even, some further proposals like tree plantation and disaster related activities by citizens were made and added in the revised budget after the presentation as the demand for social demands which was considered as priority. All the participants were pleased to observe the initiatives Union Parishad. They observed that UP bodies and Upazila personnel have their traditional mindset changed and realized that the budget meeting can be a process to ensure the UP’s transparency and accountability towards citizens.

In a remarkably short period of time, SPSRG through its experience from other unions and projects have influenced its continuous involvement with quality accompaniment has triggered a big success for a new UP to perform bigger. Shakharia Union Parishad through this practice has realized to continue to respond towards its citizens by ensuring participation and transparency to all the citizens and other stakeholders.
4.6 Right to Information:

Bangladesh is facing various types of obstacle in exercising the right of access to information; first of all people do not have enough skill about the right to information, not aware about the seeking of information, lack of knowledge where to go and how to ask for information. Most of the cases, women are sufferings lot; family not being supportive and want to see a women full engagement in domestic responsibilities including households work and caregiver. The causes of those obstacles are: cultural barriers, mindset, patriarchy society, illiteracy, less opportunity to engage in different committees etc. Besides, distance to the office (as well as safety in travel) serve as important barriers to women seeking public information. Moreover, there were the perception that others (including public officials) may not see information as important for women. Furthermore, there is a myth regarding women not caring about information as well women do not have interest to have information. SPSRG Project is trying to overcome the obstacle through some ways. i.e
- Activation of Citizen’s Information desk; so that, people can have an opportunity to have their access to information, as well sought information as per RTI law.
- Organize campaign at Union and Upazila level involvement of all stakeholders including local influential and respected political actors, social activists, and traditional leaders.
- RTI Day Observance involving stakeholders and ensure their active participation.

S. M. Ali Hussain, Former CSO member (SPSRG project) and present Union Parishad Chairman of Tultikar Union, Sylhet Sadar Upazila expreeced his opinion, “Earlier we practised open budget without sharing the expenditure with mass people. Though the community mobilization activities we are more accountable to practice participation of citizens. Now standing committee are reformed and playing their role accordingly. Besides, citizens are becoming aware on Ward Shava, Citizen Charter, Suggestion box and Access to Information (a2i).

Voice of Rights Stopped Illegal Payment

Md. Shahajahan, farmer, his two son Mehedi (13) and Moinuddin (11) read in Purbo Patakata Govt. Primary School. His sons got primary stipend but during receive the amount he had to pay 50 taka and he thought it is the rule of Govt.

In a Tea stall he first knew about SPSRG project last year. He also came to knew that with the support of NGO Forum and Manushar Jonno Foundation, NSS is going to implement this project which will aware the community people for their rights which they get from the service providers. After than he attended this Tea-Stall sessions regularly and learned various rights issues which was totally unknown to him. He knew on health rights, agriculture rights, education rights and social Safety-net.

Previously Shahajahan’s thinking was-govt. service providers are not liable to the general people for their duties and they can do anything whatever they wish. But this tea stall session changed his all previous view/thought. He realized that fees which school teachers are taking from the students before receiving the stipend is illegal. He discussed this issue with SPSRG project formed Union Citizen Forum (UCF). He met with Headmaster of Purbo Patakata Govt. Primary School and asked the reason to take this money from the students but Headmaster did not show any logical reason. Headmaster offered him not to take money from his son. Moreover, he also offered him some amount for not to share this issue with others. But he refused thats offer and wormed him to stop taking money from all students neither he would inform it to the Upazila Education Officer. As a result Headmaster stop taking money at last.

This news spread over union to union and people protest to take this illegal money to the school authority and all school of the entire Upazila bound to stop taking illegal money. People show their gratitude to the project personal for open there eyes. Now they are much aware than the previous.
According to RTI Act 2009, each Union Parishad has established the Information Desk and staff has been employed by the local government institutions with Information Desk. But these desks are not functional as per rule. Community people were not aware of what type of services available there. Though, free flow of information is a pre-requisite for establishing transparency and accountability at local governance.

Main objective of the project is to establish responsiveness of the public services ensuring transparency and accountability at local level. Necessary steps have been taken under the project including meeting on activation of Citizen’s Information Desk and RTI Clinic to enable Desk. After this meeting steps have been taken to inform the community people about the issues through courtyard & Tea stall session, farmer’s group consultation, orientation of Union Citizen Forum (UCF) and UCF meeting. Project arranged a meeting at 08 Union Parishads under project area and each Union Parishad agreed to setup the desk and keep it functional. According to the RTI Act 2009, the Union Information desk provides the following information and services: birth and death registration, public examination results, online university admission, online application for land issue, government relate forms, life insurance information, mobile banking information, agriculture, education, health, social safety-net, information about union budget and different budget allocation information.

Before arranging the meeting, 7 no Mogolgaon Union Information Desk has not been active but responsible staff was available. Md. Abdul Basit opined that people didn’t visit the desk and he has been spending most of the time idle. In recent days, people from Mogalgaon Union regularly visit and submit application for different information.

Md. Oakil Ali is an inhabitant of Mogolgaon union under Sylhet Sadar Upazila, his fathers’ name is Mayna Mia and mothers’ name is Afritun Nesa. He submitted an application regarding information on union Parishad gadget photocopy and VGD card holders list to the Mogolgaon Union Information service center. The information service officer Md. Abdul Basit then provided union Parishad gadget photocopy maintaining the follow process the application. For this purpose Md. Oakil Ali paid the photocopy bill to union information desk.

Union Information Officer, Md. Abdul Basit opined that to develop quality of services at union information and service center there is a need of skill development training and create mass awareness about the services available in that area. Union Parishad Chairman has decided to take initiatives through elected members for raising awareness of the community people in their respective constituency about the Union Information and Service Center.
Amena Begum (42) lives in Arpangasia Union at Amtali Upazila, Barguna. Her husband Jahangir Khan is involved in agriculture and business. From the girlhood Amana had a desire to do something for her neighbors which may influence to change their life. When she got chance she tried to help them from her level and feel happiness.

Due to her early marriage she did not complete her school education and after her marriage she became busy with her family and children. But her philanthropist mind always searched the opportunity to do something. After her elder girl’s marriage she got such an opportunity when she heard about SPSRG project. SPSRG project staffs invited her in a courtyard session.

After attend in a courtyard session she thought, this project is such a platform where she can involve in a large canvas.

Amena Begum attended in courtyard session regularly. She learned many things. She discussed her learning with her neighbors and nearest. She tried to make them understand so than they can realize there rights and responsibilities. To see the eagerness and helpful mentality project staffs included her as a member in UCF (Union Citizen Forum).

Amena Begum realized that, most of the people of her union are poor and they don’t know about the facilities of Community Clinic. Community people thought Community Clinic is a govt. institute and govt. is responsible for its development as a whole. With the help of project staffs Amena Begum influenced the community to get involve and take part as a committee member to apply Social Accountability (SA) tools (Social Audit and Public Hearing) following proper process. Though reaction appeared from service providers but end of the day they took it very positive. As a result found some mentionable change in CC and community level. Not only that, now community people are more satisfied for behave of the service providers and there exist a very good understanding between them.

Amena and other UCF members discussed with almost inactive CC Management Committee so that they can understand their responsibilities and can perform their duties. In this regards project staffs conducted orientation session/meeting. Previously where the condition of connected road was so poor, tube-well was inactive, electricity was not available in the CC, and this condition became change gradually. Besides she worked on sitting arrangement and breast feeding corner for lactating mother at CC. Now community is aware about their rights and they feel an ownership on this Community Clinic.

Gradually her involvement of this project made her very much familiar to her Union and as a result before last UP election her neighbors and well-wishers requested her to participate in the election as a female member candidate and she won. “It was possible for the strong involvement in this project” she said and express her desire to give more effort for the improvement of this CC.
Right to Information: My Rights, My Power

Sultana Begum, (32), Union Citizen Forum member of Shakharia union, Bogra Sadar Upazila. She got married Harun-ur-Rashid (driver by profession) after completing her secondary education. She is very courageous for her social welfare works and hard-working. She has been a key role player in bringing the wellbeing for her family.

Most of the household from her villages are extreme poor Hindu families, who are mostly less knowledge and less aware about education, health, sanitation and individual rights. However, under the grassroots empowerment approach of SPSRG project, she had shown interest for being member of Union Citizen Forum (UCF) and actively participated in different activities under the SPSRG project. In addition, she was oriented on Rights to Information (Rti), Access to Information (a2i) and Marjaday Gori Samata at local level. Under the leadership of Sultana Begum, Union Citizen Forum has met across the community peoples through mobilization activities they have become conscious day by day.

While talking about the VGD selection process in the community meeting organized by Grameen Alo, Partner of NGO Forum under SPSRG Project, a query was raised from the community with a discontent voice “Why the hard core poor families like us are not getting the VGD card while the financially solvent families are getting VGD support?” They also asked about the procedure of VGD beneficiary selection and card distribution process. Prior knowing this issue, they expressed their willingness through a decision that they also have the right to know how the process is being carried out in their union and they unanimously decided to send an application to the UP chairman to know who were selected for VGD card and how the selection was conducted in the year 2015-2016.

Later, Sultana Begum, on behalf of poor and hard core poor families of Golapbari village submitted an application on VGD issues following the application format for information under the “Right to Information (RTI) Law -2009 to the designated Official of the Shakharia Union Parishad on November 14, 2015 claiming the detailed information on the VGD beneficiary selection process, allocation for VGD beneficiary and the total number of beneficiaries for the financial year 2015.

It is noticeable that, on July 14, 2015 an orientation was conducted on Right to Information issues for UCF members, volunteers, UP members, Chairman, local people and stakeholders under the SPSRG project in the Shakharia Union Parishad. With series of activities on ensuring social accountability, now people from all tier of the area know about the Right to Information Law 2009, which was a motivating factor for the hardcore poor HHs to submit their right to information. On November 21, 2015, Sultana Begum received a call from Shakharia Union Parishad and was asked to visit the Designated Official. She was warmly received by the Union Parishad and her allies for the initiative to share the information and promised to provide with the information she sought. A week later, on November 29, 2015, Sultana Begum formally received the information from Union Parishad that she had asked for.

Bondona Rani (39), Golapbari village of ShakhariaUnion

“If I had known about the process of selecting female VGD beneficiary earlier, I would have claimed it from the Union Parishad”
Right to Information: My Rights, My Power

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The Information provided by Designated Official that, a total of 112 vulnerable and destitute women have been selected as VGD beneficiaries in the Shakharia Union for the 2015-2016 cycle. The VGD beneficiaries had been selected by small working committee after through screening and home visit and a list of vulnerable and destitute women has been prepared by the committee containing eligible vulnerable and destitute women. Eligible list is verified by UP members and female representatives of the UP and finally approved by the VGD committee of the Union. VGD beneficiaries are entitled to have 30 Kgs. of rice as VGD support.

Laxmi Rani, Bondona Rani, Sonali, Chandana and others of Golapbari village of Shakharia, Union now understand that the public welfare information’s of the government and non-government service delivery institutions have been opened for general people according to the Right to Information Law 2009. Besides, during discussion, UP has also promised to incorporate actual hardcore poor families who had been excluded from the list in social safety-net initiatives by making it more transparent and participatory.

Sultana Begum has shared her experience in the group’s weekly meeting. This experience has therefore significantly increased the interest and belief of the local people in the power of Right to Information. Now Sonali, Bondona Rani and other women from poor families know what they are entitled to get from Union Parishad and grassroots community People have understood that RTI Act is such a strong and effective tool that, through its application even from a marginal woman like Sultana Begum, could force the mighty Union Parishad to answer to her queries.

Sultana Begum in front of Union Information Desk
Sultana Begum and her allies submitting application claiming information on VGD issues.

The UP Secretary (Designated Official) of Shakaria Union Parishad is handing over the RTI Application information in written form
Sultana Begum and her allies cheerfully Demonstrating their desired information from Union Parishad
Right to Information Changed the Life of the Farmers

SPSRG Project formed a farmer committee in every union and oriented them about the roles and responsibilities of service provider, agriculture service and provided instructions about the obtaining process of that service. Consequently, the Farmer’s Committee meeting holds after every three months with Sub Assistant Agriculture Officer (SAAO). In this meeting farmers are expressing their problem and SAAO is advising to solve their problems. Side by side SAAO orients them about the govt supported new technology, method and bad effect use of pesticide.

Most of the cases farmers of Gulishakhali Union were used old methods of cultivation, they didn’t know which fertilizer and insects are more effective for which crop and which is the appropriate time for planting? Due to lack of knowledge, their crop production became low. Farmers were getting frustrated and tried to overcome this situation. Though it is mandated by government that, Sub Assistant Agriculture Officer (SAAO) will expend his allotted time to visit every ward 2 days a week at union level. But most of the time he was staying at Upazila office. As a result, farmers were not getting the proper service.

To be a member of Farmer’s Committee, Md. Abdur Rob Mridha attended regular meetings orientations and tried to get those benefit. One day SAAO visited his home and provided some instructions and advised which benefited him. After that, he communicated with SAAO regularly and builded a good relationship with SAAO and he came to know that govt. distributes seeds, fertilizer and pesticide for poor farmer. So he applied for this and finally collected some seeds (Sun flower, Lintel etc.) at 24 November 2015 and Corn seeds, Alu-lota, zipsam, Robon, Manganese, Mag fertilizer from Upazila agriculture office. That year Mr. Abdur Rob prepared a display plot where he expend 12 thousand taka for 10 decimal lands and earned 30 thousand taka. Mr. Abdur Rob Mridha led his life with family smoothly. UP Chairman, member and local elite person visited this field and appreciated him for doing such things. Most of the farmers have become encouraged to see his achievement.

Mr. Abdur Rob Mridha lives at Gulisakhali Union in Amtoli Upazila of Barguna district. He is 45 years old and has two boys and two girls. It’s a matter of unhappiness that he couldn’t continue his education after class three. He is a farmer and from the very beginning he takes care of his family with his average monthly income of 4500 taka.

Now a day’s farmers of Gulisakhali arranging monthly meeting proactively to solve their problem. SAAO is meeting at UP regularly. Farmers are more aware to claim their rights and service providers are more responsible about their duty. UP chairman follow-ups the progress of agriculture sector. People are now grateful to the SPSRG project.
**Rahima Bagum is an Idol of Goskhali Union**

Gulishakhali Union situated at Amtali Union beside Paira River. Population of this union is 31,500. Most of the people of this village are poor and illiterate. After Sidr, people get assistance/relief from different NGOs, organizations and Govt officials, as a result community people have lack of knowledge regarding the rights and rights claiming process.

Since October 2014, SPSRG project took initiatives like; information dissemination, organized people to claim and raise their voice for their rights and develop awareness into the community. Project formed Union Citizen Forum (UCF) with the combination of 20 people of different occupations.

Rahima begum, 30 years old have one son and one daughter lived at Goskhali village in Gulishakhali Union. She is an active member of UCF. In this journey with SPSRG project she attended different orientation and meeting. She accentuated her knowing about rights and responsibility by attending courtyard meeting regularly. Apart from this, she did some social work, visited school and community clinic regularly, maintain regular communication with Union Parishad and meet with Sub Assistant Agriculture Officer. She inspired people to send their child in school.

Due to financial crisis family member of Amena stopped her study at her girlhood and try to send her other place for work. But Rahima Begum motivated Amena’s family to continue her study by showing the benefit of education. Side by side she informed Headmaster about this to take initiative to stop drop-out. Finally, Headmaster gave word to bear all education expenses of Amena. To see her responsiveness community people select her as a Parents teachers association (PTA) member.

Apart from this, regularly she visited the Gulishkhali Community clinic and tried to identify the shortcoming of its service. She found the shortage of medicine, there was no medicine chart in this clinic, surrounding environment of clinic was dirty, the infrastructure of the road was too bad and need to be earth filling in front of CC. She communicates with Chairman to solve the problem. UP Chairman promised to solve the problem. To see her sincerity Community people and CHCP also recommended her to be a member of CCMC. Consequently, SPSRG project took a decision to perform a Social Accountability tools called Social Audit. A committee consist of 5 members from UCF, community people CCMC representatives have been formed. This committee checked relevant all documents of CC especially; budget, income and expenditure, service quality and satisfaction level of community people. UCF and community group organized a public hearing on this issue with the help of SPSRG team.
From Citizen to Citizen’s Representative: Route to Empowerment

Amena Begum (40) and her husband Raza Mia (56), a small shopkeeper lives in Tultikar Union at Sylhet Sadar Upazila. When she was a student of class Ten, she was selected as a volunteer for FIVDB project. After her marriage she had to left school as well as volunteer work. She had a strong desire for higher study and had a dream to do something for society though it was restricted from her family. In 2014, after a discussion with her family she was selected as an Union Citizen Forum (UCF) member under the SPSRG project.

As an active member of UCF she was played a vital role to form farmers group, PTA and courtyard group under the project. Amena Begum was participated in various capacity building initiatives (orientation, training, exchange visit, advocacy meeting etc.) from the project. As an UCF member she kept continuing her network with different stakeholders’ i.e. SMC/PTA, SAAO, UP. To see her dedication she was selected as a SMC member of Mira Para Abdul latif Primary School during 2015. Besides, she had contributed various school development work and cultural activities. She was tremendously work for convincing the guardian of drop out children, specially emphasize given to the child marriage. She kept to make them understand from her life and suffering for not to complete her education and how education can change their life.

For this involvement she made a nice connection and network. She became popular in her village for her dedication to do for others. It reached her at a strong position of the society and made a great acceptance in all level. On the request of her neighbors, she participated in last UP election, 2016 in the reserve sit for women. Finally, she was elected as a member of a ward by getting a huge number of votes. After elected she is now trying to establish a Community Clinic; there is no CC at Tultikar Union. She is searching land donor and in this connection she is keeping her communication with UP, Upazila Chairman and Civil surgeon. Amena realized that she has the opportunity to do for the society. To ensure the entitled rights of the people she always wants to stay beside them.
Rahima Bagum is an Idol of Goskhali Union Gulishakhali Union situated at Amtali Union beside Paira River. Population of this union is 31,500. Most of the people of this village are poor and illiterate. After Sidr, people get assistance/ relief from different NGOs, organizations and Govt officials, as a result community people have lack of knowledge regarding the rights and rights claiming process. Since October 2014, SPSRG project took initiatives like; information dissemination, organized people to claim and raise their voice for their rights and develop awareness into the community. Project formed Union Citizen Forum (UCF) with the combination of 20 people of different occupations.

Rahima begum, 30 years old have one son and one daughter lived at Goskhali village in Gulishakhali Union. She is an active member of UCF. In this journey with SPSRG project she attended different orientation and meeting. She accentuated her knowing about rights and responsibility by attending courtyard meeting regularly. Apart from this, she did some social work, visited school and community clinic regularly, maintain regular communication with Union Parishad and meet with Sub Assistant Agriculture Officer. She inspired people to send their child in school.

Due to financial crisis family member of Amena stopped her study at her girlhood and try to send her other place for work. But Rahima Begum motivated Amena's family to continue her study by showing the benefit of education. Side by side she informed Headmaster about this to take initiative to stop drop-out. Finally, Headmaster gave word to bear all education expenses of Amena. To see her responsiveness community people select her as a Parents teachers association (PTA) member.

Apart from this, regularly she visited the Gulishkhali Community clinic and tried to identify the shortcoming of its service. She found the shortage of medicine, there was no medicine chart in this clinic, surrounding environment of clinic was dirty, the infrastructure of the road was too bad and need to be earth filling in front of CC. She communicates with Chairman to solve the problem. UP Chairman promised to solve the problem.

To see her sincerity Community people and CHCP also recommended her to be a member of CCMC. Consequently, SPSRG project took a decision to perform a Social Accountability tools called Social Audit. A committee consist of 5 members from UCF, community people CCMC representatives have been formed. This committee checked relevent all documents of CC especially; budget, income and expenditure, service quality and satisfaction level of community people. UCF and community group organized a public hearing on this issue with the help of SPSRG team.
Some Photographs:
Addressing poverty through governance has become a number of development and good governance challenges. This is especially true for rural areas where 80% of the country chronically poor lives. Stronger local governance institutions, together with increased participation and citizen engagement, offer key strategies to address poverty in countries such as Bangladesh. These strategies seek to bring government closer to citizens, so that public officials can more easily meet the demands of citizens and be accountable to them. The result is better designed and targeted interventions across a range of basic services.

The results that have emerged from the practice of different SA tools by NGO Forum and their respective shown that the power and advantage of SA tools are being gradually recognized. There are indications of mainstreaming of such social accountability tools into their practice. From attitudinal perspective, the supply side, remains little reluctant in the beginning, but has been willing to cooperate and participate with CSOs.

Whereas from the empowerment perspective, citizens begins to work through community entities/groups and generate and hold more evidences. Information and consciousness have the empowering effect among the community. It has increased dialogue and constructive engagement between people and local government. In course of the practice of SA tools by the community, there have occurred restitution of resources to the intended rights holders in addition to exposition of falsehood and initiation of promise for correction measures. Improvement in the performance of public service organizations has also improved where SA tools have been practiced.

By raising voices, improving accountability, in recent years, social accountability tools have gained popularity as informal and easily accessible strategies for increasing citizen voices and improving public accountability. These tools include a broad range of actions and mechanisms that citizens and communities can use to hold public officials accountable, in both local and national arenas. Results, however, have been mixed. Social accountability actions are often uncoordinated and can be seen as "going through the motions" of participation. That is, they spur participation by using technical tools, which may be prone to political control or may not confront deeper political obstacles.

Sensitized and functional community groups/forums under the projects and several types of community groups/forums were created or activated. Examples range from Citizen Watch Groups and their Upazila as well as district networks working. However, empowered citizenry and client power has been increased using the SA Tools as sensitized citizens working collectively and equipped with information/knowledge with high spirits have been able to make their voices heard and addressed. As demanded by citizens during interface meeting, public hearing, citizens’ information desk in all Union Parishad has been playing a vital role for information sharing. This project finds that the position that social accountability mechanisms have fallen short of their objectives because they have not been fully institutionalized or linked to formal accountability mechanisms. Therefore, creating stronger links could help formal mechanisms be more responsive to local needs.


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