

SEEDING CHANGE

*Enabling local governments and key influencers
across Asia to learn, share and collaborate on
strengthening governance*



INTRODUCTION

Local Governance Initiative and Network (LOGIN) is a member-driven south-south learning community and change coalition committed to advance democracy, decentralisation and local governance reform in Asia.

Since 2014, LOGIN has served as a catalyst for local governments, key influencers and enablers across the Asian region to connect, learn, share, ideate and collaborate on improving governance.

This booklet captures a few of the many ways in which LOGIN has contributed to creating a more vibrant space for citizens and local governments in Asia. It showcases how transformation is enabled once peers across borders commit themselves to partnerships that are grounded in experiential learning.

The featured stories recount the strengthening of women's political participation and decision-making in Bhutan and Pakistan; engaging citizens to transform public service delivery in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar; influencing policy to increase the efficacy of local governments and mapping power dynamics for implementing significant community-driven initiatives in Cambodia; and seeding a culture of learning and innovation among rural local governments in India.

We are hopeful that these are the first of many more to emerge from our membership.

PARTNERING FOR CHANGE

*Joining hands to empower women
in politics in Bhutan*

Women's participation in decision-making and in public spaces in Bhutan is showing signs of an upswing. Defying traditional gender roles and cultural bias, women are stepping outside their comfort zones to play a more significant role in local governance and politics.

Bhutan Network for Empowering Women (BNEW), a member of LOGIN since even before it was registered formally, works to strengthen women's representation in local governance and politics. It has a membership of over 4,000 women across Bhutan's 20 districts and 205 gewogs (blocks). BNEW - being a young organisation - was looking to formalise its intervention strategies for the medium term and assessed that it could benefit from better understanding the work of The Hunger Project (THP) in India.

THP India works towards empowering elected women representatives as key change agents in local governance institutions by strengthening their political participation and leadership. The organisation uses a five-year election cycle strategy, Strengthening Women's Empowerment through Electoral Process (SWEEP), to capacitate and support women leaders.

BNEW engaged in a peer learning with THP and partnered to adapt and localise relevant aspects of the SWEEP strategy, keeping in sight Bhutan's 2016 local government elections (LGE). The actions included a pre-election outreach campaign, a series of capacity building and leadership development workshops for the candidates, and gender sensitisation initiatives targeted at election officers, local government functionaries and the media.

The efforts resulted in the mobilisation of more than 3,000 women for the 2nd LGE 2016; the number of women elected to the highest levels of local governance in the LGE doubled. The overall number of EWRs in the local governments increased from 98 (2011) to 171 (2016).

The peer partnership has been acknowledged as contributing to creating an enabling environment for women's empowerment through the electoral process in Bhutan.



MAPPING POWER

*Mapping stakeholder power dynamics to
implement community-led natural resource
management in Cambodia*

Attending a LOGIN learning event on strengthening civic engagement and social accountability in 2016 proved valuable for LOGIN member, Pact Cambodia by way of exposure to regional experiences in promoting citizen-led accountability mechanisms.

The timing was significant, given Pact's efforts at the time to pilot proposed recommendations for the revision of Cambodia's Environmental Code, specifically on measures to strengthen natural resource management.

Of particular interest to Pact was the Powercube,¹ which was used to map the role of stakeholders in the environment sector at the national and the sub-national level. The power mapping exercise was piloted in Stung Treng Province with the active engagement of key stakeholders including government officials, non-governmental organisations, commune councillors and community/citizen leaders. The mapping revealed the distribution of power among key actors in the province within the context of environmental management. It also enabled the identification of potential champions who could be engaged with and trained for effective implementation of the co-patrolling initiative. The results of the analysis were presented in a report recommending the platforms and interface mechanisms to focus on in support of natural resource management.

The intervention resulted in endorsement from the sub-national administrations to test out co-management activities. High-level discussions were held on co-patrolling of community forests involving community leaders and local councillors. At the ground level, pilot co-patrolling of community forest activities were rolled out.

The power mapping exercise helped prepare the ground for co-management of forest reserves as well as capacity building of leaders and functionaries for decentralised natural resource management.

¹ Tool designed by Institute of Development Studies, Sussex to analyse power for social change

LEARNING TOGETHER, GROWING TOGETHER

*Seeding a desire to learn and innovate
within the rural local governments of
Gujarat, India*

Since its inception, LOGIN has championed the use of innovative experiential learning methodologies. A demonstration of such a non-conventional methodology is evident in the Horizontal Learning Program (HLP), which is anchored by the National Institute of Local Government, Bangladesh, a member of LOGIN. HLP is an outcome-based peer-to-peer learning process enabling local governments to identify, share, adapt, and replicate good practices towards good governance.

SETU Abhiyan, a LOGIN member working to strengthen local governance in the Indian state of Gujarat, was exposed to HLP at a LOGIN workshop. SETU was quick to identify the potentials of HLP to the context in which it worked - Kutch, one of the largest districts of India with far flung remote villages. The SETU team introduced the HLP concept and processes to a section of the elected village councils in Kutch to validate the relevance of the experience and the interest of the council members. The enthusiasm of the council members to connect and learn from peers led to the successful piloting of HLP in a block (village cluster). Driven by the demand of the village councils themselves, the HLP initiative was scaled up to the district level in 2017 in collaboration with other stakeholders.

The concept was shared through existing case studies which were published in the local newspaper, Kutch Mitra, with the aim of inspiring village councils to participate in the process. A total of 136 applications were received, which went through two rounds of evaluation processes including field visits conducted by experts on local governance. A total of 24 practices were validated and voted by the councils of Kutch as best practices that can be replicated for improved local governance.

A culture of learning and innovation has been fostered among the village councils, enabling them to appreciate the efforts of their peers and replicate best practices in their own context.

DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL

*Integrating social accountability to ensure
efficacy of development programming in
Bangladesh*

CARE Bangladesh, a member of LOGIN, works significantly on improving local governance by focussing on addressing the dimensions of exclusion and inequity, and on creating an enabling environment for the marginalised to demand their rights and hold local functionaries to account.

The convening of a LOGIN learning engagement on improving accountability, transparency and civic engagement in 2016 proved timely, given CARE Bangladesh's focus at the time on developing a strategy to mainstream governance across its programmes. The LOGIN workshop focused on tactical and strategic social accountability approaches, highlighting information, mobilisation and interface between the domains of state and citizen action.

Learnings from the workshop were used to capacitate its field staff involved in ground-level implementation of projects, providing them not just a theoretical perspective but also a better understanding of the political strategies underpinning their approaches to enable inclusion of the deprived and marginalised in local development.

One of the social accountability tools promoted through the workshop, the Powercube,² was integrated with the organisation's own local political economy analysis. This enabled a more incisive mapping of network of positive and negative influencers at all levels which acted as determinants of quality of service and helped CARE revisit its engagement strategy vis-a-vis different actors. Specifically, the tool was applied to assist CARE's maternal health project team in mapping key stakeholders who helped identify gaps in health service delivery in two Union Parishads of Gazipur District.

Sharing of findings with the relevant agencies and actors at the sub district level contributed to improved service delivery at community clinics and increased budget allocation for the underserved. More significantly, there was an increased uptake of services by marginalised communities.

² Tool designed by the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex to analyse power for social change

COMPETE AND GROW

*Incentivising performance of local
governments for better service delivery in
rural Cambodia*

The Cambodian Ministry of Economy and Finance's (MEF) Sub-National Investment Fund (SNIF) initiative enables local governments to access funds in a competitive manner as a means of building their capacities to manage public investments. The first ever performance-based grants system for local governments in Cambodia, SNIF aims at transparent and efficient delivery of essential services in rural areas.

In 2015, while SNIF was still in design stage, a LOGIN member and representative from the MEF-SNIF team sought to learn from the experiences of other countries in allocation of funds to local governments. A LOGIN learning initiative on local development funds provided the means to do so.

A key takeaway for SNIF was the need to harmonise different means of financing local development such as intergovernmental fiscal transfers, donor funds and local contributions by developing relevant and manageable performance criteria for local governments to access development grants. Another takeaway was the need to capacitate local governments on optimal utilisation of funds.

Learnings from the workshop informed the design of the SNIF legal regulation. Specifically, a set of simple and manageable minimum conditions and performance measures were identified to determine the transfer of funds to local governments.

SNIF was piloted in 62 districts of Cambodia and by December 2017, 19 districts had passed the annual performance assessment to withdraw grants for approved development projects. The initiative was scaled up to include 61 additional districts in 2018, of which 15 had qualified for the SNIF grants. In 2019, SNIF will scale up to all 159 districts, of which 65 districts (top 15 districts to qualify) will compete for government funds and 94 districts (top 30 to qualify) will compete for development partner funds.

SNIF has paved the way towards transforming local governments into more effective delivery institutions, ultimately benefitting the Cambodian population.

MORE THAN A SCORE

*Empowering citizens to ensure
accountability and responsiveness of local
government institutions in Afghanistan*

As in many Asian countries, weak accountability poses a challenge to good governance in Afghanistan. The state, local agencies and international development organisations are striving for better transparency and answerability in governance.

Participating in a LOGIN workshop on social accountability enabled Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA), a member of LOGIN, to learn from other Asian experiences in improving civic engagement and to be introduced to relevant tools that could be used to hold governments to account. Given its mandate to promote transparency and accountability, IWA used the learnings from LOGIN members to supplement its interventions, by adapting the Community Score Card (CSC)³ tool to assess the efficacy of public service delivery in a localised context.

The CSC was applied to assess the performance of Kabul Municipality by IWA's Provincial Integrity Network (comprising volunteers from civil society, media, government, provincial council, universities etc.) in 2016. The tool was applied in 22 districts of Kabul city, enabling citizens to score the performance of the Municipality on a set of parameters.

The results revealed clear areas for improving responsiveness and transparency in the functioning of the Municipality; the findings were shared not just with Municipality officials but also the Office of the President. The initiative contributed to a reform in the management of Kabul Municipality in 2017, including the setting up of a Public Information Office to cater to citizens' information needs, enabling improved communication between local government and the community, and better redress of public grievances.

³ The Community Score Card, originally developed by CARE Malawi in 2002, is a community-based monitoring tool for the assessment, planning, monitoring and evaluation of service delivery.

BREAKING THE CEILING

*Integrating functional literacy to
augment women's participation in local
governance in Pakistan*

South Asia Partnership Pakistan (SAP-PK), a member of LOGIN, works to empower marginalised communities, including women, to create an enabling environment for inclusive and participatory governance. A key challenge facing efforts to capacitate women leaders to take their rightful place in governance in Pakistan is the low female literacy rate.

Connecting with Bhutan Network for Empowering Women (BNEW), a LOGIN peer supporting women's political empowerment in Bhutan, provided fresh impetus to SAP-PK's strategy in the run-up to the 2017 local government elections. Specifically, BNEW's focus on functional literacy as a building block for meaningful participation of women in local governance.

SAP-PK added a functional literacy component to the training modules for women community leaders at Aagahi centres (women awareness centres) in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces before the 2017 elections.

SAP-PK's efforts enabled more than 2,300 women community leaders in the two provinces to file their candidature, contest elections and participate in local council committees. Powered by informed and impactful campaigns, more than 750 of the women candidates were elected as councillors. Many of the councillors claimed to be better able to read local plans and provide relevant inputs as well as to negotiate with service providers and authorities for their rights, budgets and plans.

Integrating functional literacy in the capacity building of women candidates coupled with SAP-PK's existing strategy has contributed to improved participation of women in local governance, specifically their capacity to comprehend and influence local policies and plans.

TAPPING THE UNTAPPED

*Crafting spaces for constructive engagement
between civil society and local governments
in Myanmar*

Oxfam Myanmar, a member of LOGIN, aims to reduce poverty and inequality by ensuring more transparent, accountable and responsive governance. Towards this end, the organisation works with both local governments and civil society organisations (CSOs), in terms of capacity building and advocating for constructive engagement through social accountability (SA) practices.

Participating in a 2016 LOGIN learning event on improving accountability, transparency and civic engagement exposed the Oxfam team to regional experiences in implementing SA as well as theoretical concepts and practical tools. Insights and materials from the event were used to ground Oxfam's work into a more rigorous theoretical framework of SA.

Of particular interest was Mongolia's Glass Account Law⁴ and the Powercube⁵ tool. The Glass Account Law could serve as a regional reference point for transparency and right to information that could be used to advocate for similar legislations in Myanmar.

The Powercube tool related directly to Oxfam's ongoing efforts to create an enabling environment for SA. The team used the tool to identify specific points of advocacy with local and national governments in terms of opening up spaces for civic engagement that had not been used before. Concepts of 'creating space' and 'invited spaces' from the Powercube were integrated in relevant training modules as part of Oxfam's capacity building programmes for CSOs and local government officials.

While efforts continue to intensify the engagement with government officials and policy makers, the trainings have resulted in CSOs becoming more aware of potential engagement spaces/opportunities besides the current created spaces and leveraging these forums to target their advocacy interventions better.

⁴ Mongolia's Glass Account Law obliges government agencies to share budgets, financial expenditure and other public finance details available to the public demonstrating the accountability of the state to the citizens

⁵ Tool designed by Institute of Development Studies, Sussex to analyse power for social change

FEATURED MEMBER INSTITUTIONS

Bhutan Network for Empowering Women

Website: bnew.bt

CARE Bangladesh

Website: carebangladesh.org

The Hunger Project India

Website: thp.org/our-work/where-we-work/india/

Integrity Watch Afghanistan

Website: iwaweb.org

Ministry of Economy and Finance of Cambodia

Website: mef.gov.kh

Oxfam Myanmar

Website: myanmar.oxfam.org

Pact Cambodia

Website: pactworld.org/country/cambodia

SETU Abhiyan

Website: setuabhiyan.org

South Asia Partnership Pakistan

Website: sappk.org

MEMBER SPEAK

“...creates spaces for **inclusive governance practitioners to learn beyond the boundary of limited resources in respective organisations**, share challenges in inclusive governance, and gain knowledge and skills around diversified issues and strategies with regard to local governments”

- *Murad Bin Aziz, Governance Coordinator, CARE Bangladesh*

“...**a neutral space** for civil society organisations, governments and development practitioners to sit together and discuss real issues that we are trying to solve”

- *Souphaphone Dangmany, Aid Effectiveness Officer, Laos Civil Society Consortium*

“...it is a **new culture of capacity development...**allows us to directly talk to our colleagues across countries and tap into their **experiences around citizen engagement, good practices and even lessons learnt.**”

- *Sophal Chhor, Senior Decentralization and Governance Adviser, Coalition for Partnerships in Democratic Development, Cambodia*



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