

Assessing Appropriateness and Strengths of Local Support Organisations for Strengthening Public Accountability



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Assessing Appropriateness and Strengths of LSOs for Strengthening Public Accountability

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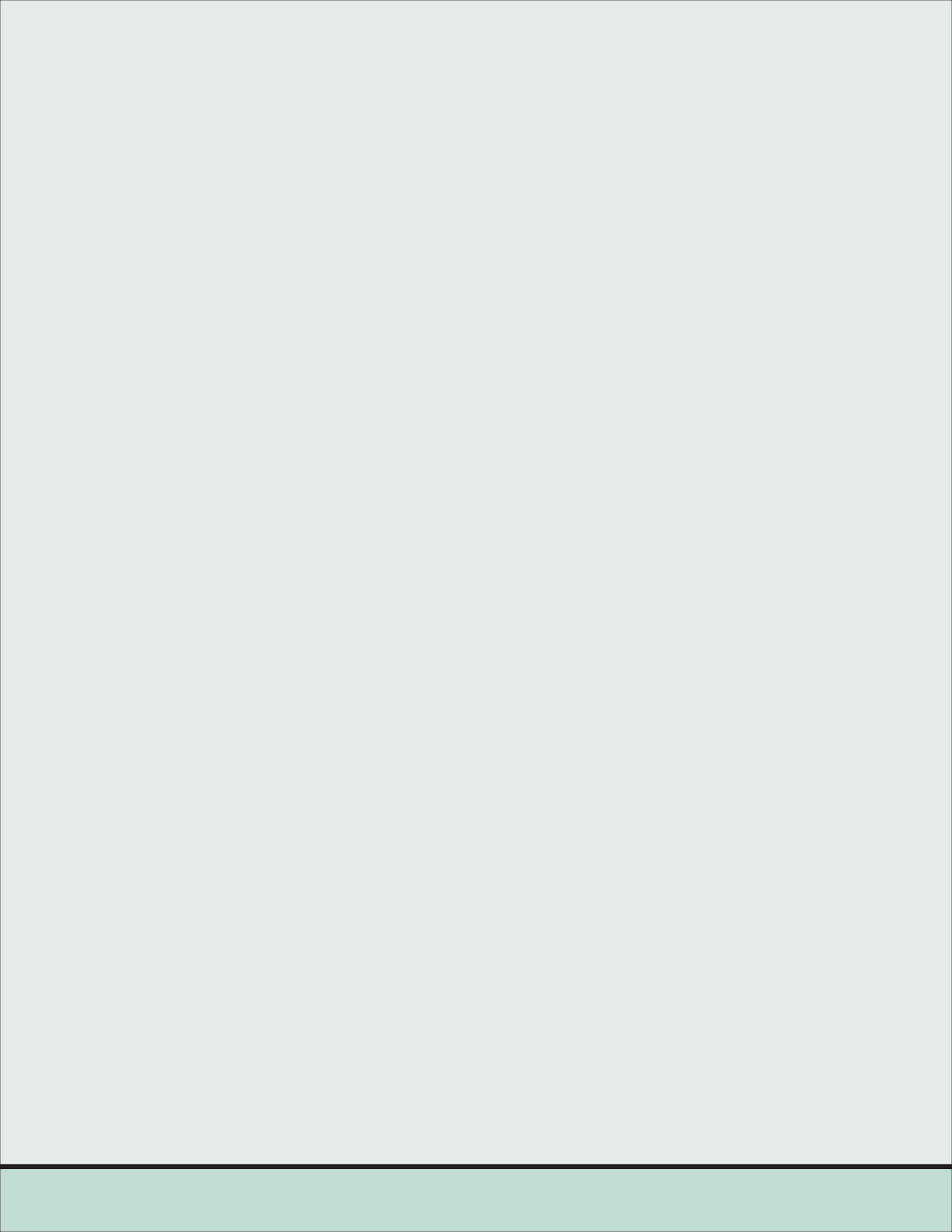
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Table of Contents

1.	Executive Summary	01
2.	Role of local Communities in Accountability – Background	02
3.	RSP Movement - Articulating citizen voice and energies	03
4.	LSOs – Grass Root Custodians of Citizen Empowerment	04
5.	LSO-Advantages and Strengths for Articulating Citizen Voice	06
6.	RSPs-LSO Network for Improved Governance - The promise	08
7.	LSO Nabipur-A Case Study in Public Accountability	09
8.	Role of RSP-LSO Nabipur in improving Public Accountability-Some Lessons	09
9.	RSPN/LSO Model for Promoting Accountability	10
10.	Proposed Model: RSPN/LSO led Public Accountability	11
11.	Conclusion	14



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report explores the nexus between public accountability framework and articulated voice of common citizenry. Insufficient evidence of effectiveness of local governance institutions as instruments of public accountability in Pakistan has necessitated identification of alternate avenues for effective oversight of governance regime by common citizens. Successful experience of Rural Support Programmes (RSPs) in recent decades has established the efficacy of community mobilisation strategies as a means for local development and poverty reduction. The report critically analyses various components of RSP framework including Community Organisations (CO), Village Development Organisations (VDO) and specifically Local Support Organisations (LSO) to identify their strengths in articulating citizen voice and aspirations as catalysts for good governance. It is argued that essential elements of an effective public accountability system, viz, Citizen Voice, Organisational Capacities and Functional Linkages can be identified in RSP philosophy as their practicing ethos. The report proposes an innovative model for promoting public accountability by combining strengths of Local Support Organisations and RSPN, duly supported by their existing and prospective linkages. Such a model can be owned and sustained by ever increasing depth and coverage of LSOs which are constantly energised by voice and conviction of local communities. RSPN can provide much needed upward linkages besides helping LSOs in terms of organisational capacity building and stakeholder liaison. Rigorous pursuit of this strategy can help promote an effective, locally owned and apolitical public accountability culture which would in turn improve governance and enhance pro-poor service delivery.

Role of local Communities in Accountability - Background:

Relationship between improved governance and enhanced citizen engagement has gained currency in development discourse during recent years. Improved participation practices can empower and organise citizenry for seeking more responsive and accountable state apparatuses which in turn can improve pro-poor service delivery. In medium to short term, these positive transformations in state-citizen relationship help sustain development and stability. Alongside these positive contributions to development and well being of society, strengthened citizen voice can also secure individual and collective rights and entitlements of ordinary citizens in an effective manner. Last but not the least, transparency and accountability in business of state, resulting from stronger citizen voice and participation can automatically improve public resource utilisation while minimising chances of corruption and wastage.

2. It may also be mentioned that relationship between articulated voice or enhanced participation and accountable systems of the state may not be positive all the time.¹ In cases, positive outcomes may be accompanied by (often unintended) negative consequences including an enhanced sense of frustration, manipulation, outright corruption, elite capture etc. Example of local governments introduced under Local Government Ordinance 2001 (LGO 2001) in Pakistan can be cited in this regard. While introduced with avowed objectives of enhancing citizen participation in state affairs and improving service delivery, its implementation over the last eight years has left many question marks. Any benefits from grass root involvement of citizens appear to have been largely offset by wide-spread incidences of corruption, inefficiencies, negative politicisation and weakening writ of government. No wonder that even after two tenures of elected local governments across Pakistan, nearly all provincial governments and political parties are in a major fix regarding the future of local governance in Pakistan. Not that inherent merit of decentralisation can be questioned in any manner, but there is a strong case for coming up with additional and innovative solutions for fostering public participation in local communities as a means to promote a culture of transparency and accountability.

3. Before proceeding further in identifying suitable solutions for above-mentioned challenges, it will be useful to deconstruct the notion of accountability of state apparatuses in the specific context of Pakistan. Centrality of the notion of accountability in state structures in Pakistan can be debated from two separate perspectives. Firstly, as a major provider of essential social services for common citizens, government institutions are primary custodians of state resources. Development expenditure on physical infrastructure including roads, schools, hospitals, municipal services etc are all primarily made by government outfits. Secondly, state institutions are also legally mandated to ensure protection of rights and entitlements of individual citizens. Across the board and transparent handling of issues

¹Citizen, Participation and Accountability, DRC, DFID

involving ownerships, proprietary rights, land titling, utility services, licensing, equitable distribution of state subsidies etc represent a primary responsibility of state institutions. In both these instances, actions of state institutions and functionaries have a direct relevance and impact on the very fabric of life of ordinary citizens. Arbitrariness, corruption, inefficiencies or institutional failures have a huge potential of destabilising the whole fabric and the very essence of the society.

4. It is in this backdrop that role of citizen participation, articulated voice and organised mobilisation become critical and central to any debate on transparency and accountability. While political participation through legislatures may be cited as a critical instrument of linking citizenry with state edifice, limitations of "representational participation" for localised or grass-root accountability are far too obvious in Pakistan. Elite capture, party-based politicking, federal-provincial frictions or bureaucratic collusion usually exclude the masses at the local level from working or decision-making processes of state structures. With a less than convincing performance of citizen representation mechanisms introduced under LGO 2001, it is essential to explore other possibilities whereby citizen voice is articulated through social mobilisation strategies for promoting demand for effective accountability and transparency.

5. Again, it may also be useful to refer to essential ingredients of the accountability framework that can empower citizenry in seeking their legitimate entitlements or grievance redressal. The first element in this regard has to be **the articulated voice of common citizens** which is critical for providing an oversight layer over the working of state functionaries or institutions. Social mobilisation and citizen organisations are the building blocks over which edifice of articulated voice of society can be predicated. Of equal relevance in this regard could be the **organisational potential** of citizen groups or bodies which can impact lives of common citizens through meaningful interface with relevant government or private service delivery entities. In other words, organised groups of citizenry need to possess a threshold level of internal capacity for effective engagement and performing oversight functions. Lastly but directly related to the previous pillars is the **effectiveness of functional linkages** between citizens and government or non-state systems which can sustain and nurture a culture of meaningful transparency and accountability, nurtured through citizen voice. It is the sum-total of these three features that can form the basis of an effective governance framework which is transparent as well as accountable to a socially mobilised and articulated citizenry.

RSP Movement-A time-tested instrument for articulating citizen voice and energies:

6. The phenomenon of Rural Support Programmes (RSPs) in Pakistan owes its origin to pioneering works by the likes of Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan and Mr. Shoaib Sultan Khan. RSP philosophy essentially focuses on the poor and disadvantaged sections of society who are systematically encouraged and groomed to be organised

with a view to fight poverty and seek collective empowerment. This model was perfected through the untiring efforts of Mr. Shoaib Sultan Khan in the shape of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) which was started in early eighties and has now become a benchmark for community-driven development. Success of AKRSP motivated further replications as other RSPs including Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP), Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP) and National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) between 1989 and 1991. Later additions to RSPs during nineties include Thardeep Rural Development Programme (TRDP), Ghazi Brotha Taraqiyati Idara (GBTI), Punjab Rural Support Programme (PRSP) and Sindh Rural Support Organisation (SRSO). The latest addition to RSPs is Sindh Graduate Association (SGA) which became a recognised RSP in 2001. All these RSPs share a common vision for poverty reduction and rural development through community organisations and citizen empowerment. Poverty reduction strategy of RSPs is designed to groom local communities and cadres of social activists who are facilitated by support organisations and who can benefit from targeted interventions through various layers of community organisations in the form of community or village organisations. Social Activists play the role of catalysts in this cycle and may include a social organiser, a village or community organisation's activist and a village specialist. Typical initiatives undertaken by RSPs may be of the nature of social mobilisation, micro-credit, natural resource management, physical infrastructure improvements or skills development.

7. RSPs today have an impressive outreach both in terms of geographical spread as well as sheer numbers which is hardly matched by any other non government outfit. By mid 2010, a total of 105 out of 139 districts and 3,502 out of 5,565 union councils in Pakistan had RSP presence. Again, out of a total of 12,717,046 households in RSP covered districts, an impressive 3,326,011 households have already been organised through RSP interventions. In terms of community organisations in RSP districts, a total of 226,500 COs including 41% female COs have so far been organised by RSPs. These COs have a total membership of around four million including substantial women representation.²

Local Support Organisations (LSO) – Grass Root Custodians of Citizen Empowerment:

8. The idea of strengthening Local Support Organisations (LSOs) represents a major transformation in the philosophy of the RSP movement. The need for redefining the historical role of RSPs was being felt for quite some time as it was being realised that greater functional autonomy for local communities was the only solution for sustaining the gains of social mobilisation. While the RSP could continue in a mentoring or facilitation role, the actual implementation of poverty or development initiatives needed to be owned and championed by the local community itself. Existence of any

²A study of LSOs in rural Pakistan by Mahmood Hassan Khan, 2010

Assessing Appropriateness and Strengths of LSOs for Strengthening Public Accountability

LSO should therefore be reflective of the willingness and maturity of any community to partner with or benefit from any resourcing or support meant for poverty alleviation at the local levels. The idea is to help local organisations (COs or VDOs) in overcoming inherent challenges of limited human resources or lack of timely information regarding strategic opportunities.

9. RSP's support for the notion of LSOs is therefore an effort to ensure sustainability of local communities' mobilisation as well as local development efforts. It may also be termed as maturing of the process of social mobilisation wherein a localised mechanism and institutional arrangement is being incentivised for better articulation and addressing localised needs. In this way, the role of RSP has been transformed as greater responsibilities for local development are being assigned to LSOs. This situation is also helping RSPs in redefining their focus, once primary responsibility of identification and implementation of localised initiatives are delegated to LSOs.

10. Typically, existence of LSOs nearly coincides with geographical limits of a union council and represents culmination of three tiers of social organisation (community, village and Union). These three levels follow a logical pattern entailing mutual linkage and increasingly focused responsibilities. The first level consists of a Community Organisation (CO) which may include 15 or so members with a voted president. Several COs in a large village combine to form what is known as Village Development Organisation or VDO. With a General Body and an Executive Body, any VDO has a wider jurisdiction or mandate with selected representatives from CO making its General Body. Given its comprehensive representation, General Body of VDO is empowered to take important decisions regarding different activities of the organisation. Local Support Organisation or LSO represents the highest level where all VDOs and COs in the union Council combine as a conglomerate. LSO are governed by an Executive Committee which comprises of elected members of the General Body. Drawing its strength from the whole community across the Union Council, LSO play the pivotal role of liaison and coordination amongst constituent organisations as well as with outside formal institutions within government or non government entities. In its interaction with government or non government outfits, LSO is appropriately equipped and mandated to speak about the problems, preferences and development proposals on behalf of relevant communities. These backward and forward linkages (with grass root communities as well as with higher level organisations) represent the real potential and strength of LSOs which can be worked through for scaling up the benefits of grass root level social mobilisation.

In terms of coverage and expansion, LSOs have registered remarkable spread in a relatively short time span. From a mere 70 LSOs in 2007, the number of LSOs across Pakistan has registered a steady growth and increased to 306 in almost two years. These LSOs cover 22,013 COs and 1,956 VDOs with substantial women coverage. These LSOs cover a total of 41 districts in Pakistan representing 444,883 organised households in these districts.

LSO-Advantages and Strengths for Articulating Citizen Voice:

11. Compared to COs or VDOs, recourse to LSOs as engines of local poverty reduction or development carries several advantages. Firstly, the benefits of larger scale may enable a more pronounced linking and mutually beneficial partnership at relatively higher levels between LSOs and prospective development partners within government or outside. Secondly, the approach of LSOs (based upon locally based and well trained cadre of professional activists) can bring greater successes to any partnership by way of better assessments, mobilisation or supervision. Equally important is the fact that LSOs offer a more formal or “legally tenable” organisational structure which is duly registered and hence a definite advantage over purely voluntary community outfits. The advantages of legal status can also be critical in terms of forging more meaningful partnerships for relatively deeper or broader array of developmental initiatives. Another advantage enjoyed by LSOs is their intimate and functional relationship with a parent RSP that can bring innumerable advantages by way of technical backstopping, resource mobilisation, donor coordination as well as capacity building for greater transparency or M&E. On their part, RSPs will also benefit in the long run by grooming LSOs as their responsibilities for actual handling of localised initiatives would be shared and taken up by LSOs, reducing costs for RSPs while allowing greater space for larger policy dialogue and strategic discourse. Last but not the least, the fact that all RSPs are members of RSPN, also links the localised LSOs with the epic platform that has been and continues to lead the cause of social mobilisation at the national level.

12. In addition to these more or less generic advantages, review and assessment of working of LSOs also brings forth certain unique advantages and strengths peculiar for partnering in any good governance agenda. More important of these are discussed below:

- ❖ **Localised leadership Development:** As a typical LSO broadly covers the area and jurisdiction of a Union Council, its existence both in terms of institutional framework as well as leadership comes as a prominent reality at the local level. The fact that LSO draws its membership form across numerous COs or VDOs, the leadership of LSO can rightfully claim the pro-poor representational status. Importantly enough and in contrast to typical political patterns, the leadership groomed through LSO mechanisms is primarily and solely motivated by pro-poor considerations. Transformation of purely volunteer spirit of COs and VDOs led activism into an organisational leadership pattern through LSO offers a refreshing deviation from historical growth of leadership phenomenon. A cadre of local leaders guiding the poverty reduction and equitable development efforts at the level of LSOs have the potential of bringing sea change in local political and social contexts in rural areas of Pakistan;

- ❖ **Flexible Agenda and Roles:** The institutional features and physical locale of a typical LSO brings several advantages in terms of selection of agenda and prioritisation. Unlike COs or VDOs (which perforce have to primarily focus on the issues of neighbourhood scale and relevance), LSO can pursue goals and targets in development and poverty reduction which are of larger and varied relevance. It may either partner for an issue or priority which is relevant for the whole Union Council (literacy campaign) or may choose an item from national poverty reduction agenda (poverty targeting). The forward and backward linkages enjoyed by LSOs are conducive to pursuit of both categories of issues where instruments of social mobilisation may have any relevance;
- ❖ **Catalyst for Social Transformation:** Many of the evils and ills leading to inequitable development or incidence of poverty are primarily a manifestation of distortions in rural social order. Discriminations and deprivations are exacerbated by vulnerabilities in social and economic status which is taken as a pretext to perpetrate injustices and excesses against the vulnerable. While the social activist or volunteer at the village level may not be able to break through these distortions, the elevated level of LSO invariably enables its cadres to meaningfully challenge the social status quo. This potential of LSO based leadership in questioning old and discriminatory elements of localised socio-economic systems can be appropriately channelised for fast track poverty reduction and equitable development.
- ❖ **Complimenting and Strengthening Local Governance Institutions:** This point is extremely relevant for Pakistan with a long history of fragile and inefficient local governance institutions. Role of local governance institutions in improving localised service delivery and promoting the notion of grass roots level political participation can not be overemphasised. However, chequered and somewhat tarnished history of local governance institutions in Pakistan is indicative of some systemic and endemic flaws in localised politics. A cursory analysis of recent tenures of elected local governments under LGO 2001 will only reinforce this proposition as charges of inefficiencies, politicisation and outright corruption are far too common. In such a situation, institutions of the nature of LSO can play a critical and balancing role for ameliorating the ills and distortions of local governance systems. Recent experience in selected LSOs suggests that a partnership for positive pro-poor initiatives can be forged with local government institutions while keeping the spirit of social mobilisation and pro-poor development intact. Such complementarities and selected partnerships between LSOs and Local Governments can result in leveraging wider resource base which can be better utilised by following guiding principles of RSP movement;
- ❖ **Localised & Issue-based mobilisation:** Unlike typical political processes, the mobilisation by COs or LSOs is essentially local issue-focused. This is a great

advantage as politics or power politics tend to blur a sense of prioritisation when it comes to local issues or development decisions. Since LSOs owe their existence to the COs or VDOs which perforce need to look downwards, LSO agendas remain firmly grounded in local reality. In a different context, rather than pursuing run-of-the-mill objectives for advocacy or citizen mobilisation, LSOs have a greater inclination for highlighting the specific issues which are usually lost sight of by local or provincial governments. This reality check may be of immense utility in designing any public accountability or oversight framework which claims to capture the actual issues and hardships faced by common citizens at the grass roots level.

RSPs-LSO Network for Improved Governance - The promise:

13. Previous paragraphs have highlighted the gains made by the RSP movement in terms of putting in place a comprehensive framework of social mobilisation and citizen empowerment. What is noteworthy in this sojourn is the self evolving nature and incremental advancements which have led to formation of federations of three tiered community organisation networks across Pakistan. RSP hand-holding for local communities and localised initiatives has matured localised COs to become engines of local development, matching the capacities of corresponding government outfits. While the ideas of "Village and Neighbourhood Councils" envisaged under LGO 2001 could never see the light of day and citizen community boards failed in terms of evoking sense of transparency or sustainability, RSP movement successfully groomed COs into VDOs and finally LSOs. This reality reflects the strengths and merits in the very philosophy of RSP movement which truly operates in a facilitatory manner as against a donor-recipient relationship. By helping communities organise themselves, providing starting capitals followed by in-house savings, training cadres of local activists and most importantly strengthening internal structures and processes of community groups, RSPs allow COs and VDOs to groom and grow in their localised context and as per local priorities.

14. These dual qualities of strengthening the spirit of community organisation for jumpstarting local development and lending the institutional development support to its local partners differentiates RSPN from any other government or non-government organisation working for local development. The robust and functional linkages between grass root communities all the way up to RSPN headquarters allow for precious experience sharing and constant improvements in a win-for-all situation. While enjoying a marked degree of operational freedom and continued subscription to the philosophical and operational ethos of RSP movement, hundreds of LSOs have successfully pursued localised development agenda displaying impressive institutional capacities. It is this maturing and strengthening of community organisations under the banner of RSPN that has enabled LSOs to successfully venture in hitherto unfamiliar areas of governance improvements. LSO Nabipur in District Khanewal represents one such example which is being discussed in detail.

LSO Nabipur-A Case Study in Community-led Transparency & Public Accountability:

15. The starting point for LSO Nabipur was formation of 138 community organisations in rural Khanewal in an area, famous for big landlords. Starting at mohalla level, the COs soon benefited from RSP vision, communicated through PRSP and moved another step to form VDOs. Formed in 2008, LSO Nabipur covers four villages and includes five village development organisations, covering a total of 2,260 households. Around 58 loans have so far been made out of Rs 2,000,000 RSPN-funded Community Investment Fund. LSO Nabipur made some ground-breaking work when the issue of sound targeting of the needy and poor arose during implementation of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) and Chief Minister's Food Stamp Programme (CMFSP) during 2008-09. There were instances when the financial support under these two programmes was diverted to the people who did not deserve it as being economically well off. There were even instances when local waderas used this support to pay to their personal servants.

16. Disturbed at such misuse of precarious public resources meant for the destitute and poor by the local influential, LSO Nabipur came up with a strategy to combat these malpractices and ensuring delivery of government support to the needy. For this purpose, LSO Nabipur had recourse to the well developed and tried mechanism of Poverty Score Card (PSC) for identifying the needy and economically deserving households for targeting BISP and CMFSP assistance. A total of over 400 needy and deserving households were identified by LSO Nabipur which were delivered the benefits through arrangements with local postal authorities and local administration. Following the success of PSC-led intervention, LSO Nabipur came up with another innovative idea whereby free legal aid services were provided to over two dozen needy families in matters pertaining to gender justice, family and maintenance matters. Success of these initiatives was primarily a result of direct involvement of PRSP led COs and VDOs.

Role of RSP-LSO Nabipur in improving Public Accountability-Some Lessons:

17. Successful interventions by LSO Nabipur in Khanewal provide following important and innovative lessons regarding convergence of RSP-Government for a win-win result in governance.

- ❖ An innovative strategy and governance instrument, introduced by RSPs (Poverty Score Card) was successfully employed by LSO for successful outcomes;
- ❖ Interventions by LSO (or organised community networks) made up for the governance deficit of the provincial and local governments and facilitated in

Assessing Appropriateness and Strengths of LSOs for Strengthening Public Accountability

- realisation of government's policy objectives;
- ❖ PSC or Free Legal Aid initiatives by LSO or RSPs were viewed as “politically neutral” in the system, which would not have been the case, were these to be undertaken by government functionaries of local government outfits;
 - ❖ Incremental mobilisation and organisation of poorer communities in the shape of COs, VDOs and LSO enabled these communities to challenge the perverse hegemony of established status quo and local elites;
 - ❖ Joint efforts by RSP/LSO, TMA administration, provincial/federal governments and postal authorities provided a workable model of public-private partnerships in a win-for-all scenario;
 - ❖ Chances of corruption and collusion were minimised as an inherent mechanism of third-party validation came into operation through RSP/LSO;
 - ❖ Access and outreach of government service delivery was enhanced through partnership with LSO as it was possible to reach out to the most vulnerable sections of society in a cost-effective and timely manner;
 - ❖ Presence of RSP/RSPN for undertaking technical backstopping, documentation, advocacy and replication of the successful initiative ensured sustainability and lasting ownership for governance innovations;
 - ❖ Case study of LSO Nabipur exemplifies as to how two of the most valued features of good governance, namely “Transparency” and “Accountability” can be achieved by building upon gains of social mobilisation, community organisation and articulated voice through RSP interventions.

RSPN/LSO Model for Promoting Accountability:

18. Evolution of RSP movement and incremental transformations in the role and operation of LSOs in Pakistan may be termed as a successful model for articulating citizen voice and energies. The effectiveness and efficiency of this model becomes all the more relevant and pronounced when held in contrast with citizen empowerment experience through LGO 2001. The fact that the later experience could not prove effective in breaking through socio-political anomalies and distortions of our society only strengthens the conviction and philosophy of social mobilisation pursued by RSPs. Originating at the grass roots level amongst poorer communities and championed by motivated activists from within these communities, social mobilisation processes by RSP have proved extremely effective in challenging status quo and governance deficit. Similarly, successes and early gains where constructive partnerships with government entities for realising common goals of poverty reduction were forged, also point to the

inherent strength of community led activism. Lastly, the pilot successes in Poverty targeting or free legal aid initiatives through LSO activism have only broadened the possibilities of governance improvements by employing RSP philosophy. It is in this context that institutional strengths and processes of RSPN/RSP/LSO can be utilised for promoting public oversight and accountability with a view to realise the objectives of citizen empowerment and pro-poor service delivery. A proposed model on these lines can help connect local communities with governance edifice of the state in a pro-active and vibrant partnership while removing barriers of status quo, corruption and repression.

Proposed Model: RSPN/LSO led Public Accountability:

I- LSOs:

19. Articulated voice of common citizens represents the first and foremost step towards promoting public accountability. COs, VDOs and ultimately LSOs may be termed as repositories of **citizen voice and aspirations**. LSOs represent registered federations of community organisations and VDOs with elected memberships including women. Local Communities are incentivised to organise for achieving the locally identified goals of poverty reduction and development. These COs and VDOs later go through a well defined and mainstreamed process to transform into a LSO which are typically Union Council based. In the proposed model , COs or VDOs can act as the “referral” or “whistle blower” points, given the closest proximity to the seat of events. As evidenced in case of LSO Nabipur, local communities lost no time in pointing to the flawed delivery of the pro-poor products under CMFSP and BISP and brought the matter to the notice of the relevant LSO. Hence, in the proposed model, issues or concerns of government oversight may be brought up for discussion by members in the CO General Body meeting. Once thoroughly discussed and sifted in CO meeting, the matters may be referred to VDO which in turn consists of elected (or nominated) members from COs. VDO level may be sufficient to finally sift through the issues and prioritise for taking up with relevant government forums.

20. Once matters concerning oversight or accountability have been discussed and prioritised by COs and VDOs, these can be referred to the concerned LSO. As already noted, LSOs have an Executive Committee (Board) where the decision regarding appropriate level of the government or private entity for taking up the matter raised by COs or VDOs may be finalised. It is the board of the LSO which will judge what further actions are warranted and would accordingly develop a proper strategy for the issue in hand. LSOs also possess appropriate institutional and organisational capabilities to keep track of these issues and interventions for taking these to their logical conclusions. LSO would pursue the matter with relevant level of government (federal, provincial or local) or media, bar, academia, private sector, as the case may be. Movement regarding issues of accountability or transparency could be bottom-up or

top-down, as the case may be. In the case of the former, local communities may wish to highlight an instance of corruption or inefficiency in government for remedial actions. In case of the latter, LSOs on their own or on the insistence of government or RSP may wish to raise awareness about any issue of public relevance with a view to promote good governance

II- RSPN:

21. As already noted in discussion on accountability and transparency, appropriate organisational and institutional capacity are another critical component for promoting public oversight. Role of RSPN (and RSPs for that matter) has a paramount relevance for strengthening LSOs in more than one way. Firstly, RSPN typically provides the initial impetus or incentive for local communities to organise into COs or VDOs or LSOs. Once mobilised, these instruments of citizen organisation need crucial handholding and capacity boosts for smooth and sound functioning. Whether these are training in the areas of organisation systems, finances, micro-credit management, advocacy and M&E or exposure to best practices in other areas, RSPN has a crucial role to play for maturing and grooming of LSOs. Similarly, in the matters of liaison with government, donors or other stakeholders, RSPN support is vital for LSOs for a lasting and meaningful intervention. Lastly, when it comes to innovations or working with new partners or on new strategies, the institutional knowledge and facilities of RSPN may come handy for the benefit of LSOs.

22. In the proposed public accountability promotion model, capacities of RSPN and constituent RSPs can be meaningfully employed in imparting requisite training and exposure to the members of LSOs and COs/VDOs, helping them in performing the real watchdog role over the working of government and other non state entities. Similarly, RSPN also possess a deep track record for managing grants to LSOs, especially in the form of Community Investment Fund. In the present instance, grant management expertise of RSPN can help LSOs to effectively mobilise resources from diverse sources including governments, bars, donors, research institutions etc. Lastly, the comprehensive M&E experience of RSPN can help LSOs in keeping track of and gauging the impact of their interventions for promoting public accountability.

III- Effective Linkages:

23. Developing, strengthening and sustaining effective linkage amongst the diverse spectrum of stakeholders in government and outside is yet another crucial aspect for promoting public accountability. Public accountability is a culture where all stakeholders, including government, politicians, NGOs, development partners, media, bars, local bodies and private sector play their respective roles and responsibilities. Building these effective linkages can be the best guarantee against shenanigans of one or more actors of society for curbing corruption and other governance malpractices.

Assessing Appropriateness and Strengths of LSOs for Strengthening Public Accountability

In the proposed model, ability of LSOs in forging effective linkages with local governments, local bars, media as well as local influentials can provide a critical platform for uniting against corruption and governance deficits. Since LSOs directly represent the voice and aspirations of local communities, a public accountability framework can be best poised to benefit from the local voice of the citizens. Alternately, an intimate connect with grass roots realities can effectively bring any instances of corruption or mal-governance to the notice of widest range of stakeholders. In addition to these bottom linkages, the proposed model can also be effective in tapping the provincial or national level linkages through the institutional capabilities of RSPN. The network is appropriately wired and has operational synergies with a wide range of stakeholders including higher government echelons, international development partners and national level media, academia or intelligentsia. By simultaneously utilising grass-roots connections as well as leveraging national level partnerships, the proposed model can greatly empower the citizens in promoting a culture of public accountability.

LSO/RSPN Public Accountability Model:

- ❖ COs/VDOs
 - ◆ Identification of issues of mal-governance, infringements of rights or service delivery gaps and their communication to LSOs

- ❖ LSOs
 - ◆ Sifting of issues and problems received from COs/VDOs for veracity etc
 - ◆ Liaison and coordination with relevant government agencies (Local Government or Provincial Government Departments, local police or local judiciary at the district or tehsil level)
 - ◆ Follow up and coordination with other non-government partners (Local media, bars, NGOs, Intelligentsia etc for advocacy or follow up)

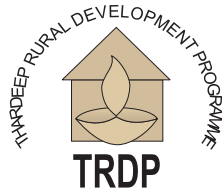
- ❖ RSPN/RSP
 - ◆ Training and organisation capacity building of LSOs, VDOs or COs – as the case may be- in government oversight, public accountability and record keeping etc ---RSPN
 - ◆ Liaison and coordination with higher government entities at the federal or provincial level for issues of mal-governance or service delivery gaps/corruptions---primarily concerned RSP
 - ◆ Liaison and Coordination with federal government, international development partners, national level NGOs or media working in the areas of citizen oversight, freedom of information and/or public accountability---RSPN
 - ◆ Advocacy, book keeping, Monitoring and Evaluation

Conclusion:

24. RSP movement has covered quite a distance to promote notions of poverty reduction and equitable development through harnessing local communities' potentials. Continuous support of RSPs has enabled grooming of second generation community mobilisation outfits-LSOs, which have displayed maturity and confidence to enter into a diverse arena of pro-poor and local development initiatives. RSPN-LSO framework, covering the society's realities from the grass roots to the national level has huge potential for diverting energies of local communities towards an ever-ambitious agenda of good governance. The latest in this regard could be a "Partnership between LSOs/RSPs/RSPN and local bars, media, local governments (if and when installed) for fostering a public accountability and local oversight regime. In this context, **the outreach** and **articulated voice** of local communities can be channelled through LSO networks while **institutional capacities** and **organisational capabilities** can be augmented through RSPN interventions. Viable and proactive partnerships can be formed through active linkage promotion by RSPN (at national level) and LSOs (at local level). Such a model can be effectively deployed for promoting a culture of transparency, public accountability and rights-based governance.

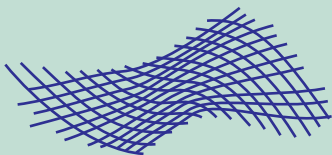
RSPs Mission Statement

The RSPs aim to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of the rural poor by harnessing the potential of people to manage their own development, through their own institutions.



RSPN Mission Statement

A prosperous Pakistan where people - especially the poor and women - are provided with equal livelihood opportunities and are not socially and economically excluded.



RSPN

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