

**- Draft -**

**District Assembly Sub-Committee Training**

**A Concept Note**

**Prepared for DISCAP Project Steering Committee Meeting**

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# **1 Introduction**

This concept note elaborates the background and rationale for a training program that focuses on building the capacity of sub-committees of the 24 District Assemblies in the three Northern Regions. It also contains a description of the scope and content of the planned training program, as well as the approach for implementation, including the sustainability of the training effort.

## ***1.1 Background***

The District Capacity Building Project (DISCAP) seeks to strengthen capacity of District stakeholders, including NGOs and the private sector to manage district development, especially improved water supply and sanitation, in a sustainable manner. Since its inception in 2000 the project has focused its attention on strengthening the institutional capacity of District administrative structures, notably the DPCUs, the DWSTs and the DEHUs. An additional component of the capacity building effort is to be focused on the deliberative or governance processes of the District Assembly.

This component of the DISCAP training Program is to be aimed at strengthening deliberative democracy through support to the Executive Committee, the Finance & Administration sub-committee and the Social services sub-committee of the DA and enhancing governance interfaces between the sub-committees and the District Administration. These sub-committees are responsible for deliberating upon key decisions that affect the determination of priorities and resources for development.

## ***1.2 Rationale***

The deliberative capacity of District Assemblies is currently weak. Elected Assembly members, and especially women, are marginalized from decisions and planning by the executive (DCEs), administration (DCDs, Planning Officers) and sector ministries. The result of this marginalization is a gap in the oversight function of the DA and correspondingly weak capacity of the DA's governance structure to demand results in areas of development, such as sustainable water and sanitation, that are crucial for poverty reduction. Functional, capable sub-committees within the assembly have the potential of providing accessible interface between ordinary citizens, including women, the poor and the marginalized, their elected representatives and the political and technical processes that initiate plans and allocate resources to them.

Three sub-committees have been identified to participate in the training programmes because of their importance and direct relevance to the water sector.

The Social Services sub-committee, which is charged with overseeing water supply and sanitation, among other services within the district, is the best structure within which to begin building improved district-wide governance for sustained, quality water supply and sanitation. For it to fulfill this role, the subcommittee's capacity needs to be built to such a level that it can effectively and efficiently deliberate with other key water and sanitation

stakeholders, notably, the water boards and WATSAN committees, to create consensus on water supply and sanitation priorities and budgets within the district.

Linkages between the Social Services sub-committee and the F&A sub-committee are also crucial in animating the required budgets for improved, equitable and sustained water supply and sanitation.

Key decision-making authority in the DA is vested in the Executive Committee, chaired by the District Chief Executive and comprising chairpersons of all the sub-committees in the DA. The work of the Ex-Com, while crucial, is currently another major weakness in planning for development. Part of this weakness is due to low level of strategic orientation in the planning and budget approval functions of this committee. The consequence tends to be decisions which reflect only minimally the needs of marginalized people, especially women in the district.

These three sub-committees are integral to the governance of the water sector and by building their capacity DISCAP aims to improve the governance of that sector, while building skills and knowledge that can be utilized in other sectors. The training programme has been designed to work with these three sub-committees on 3 different themes as detailed below.

### ***1.3 Goal and Objectives***

The overall goal of the training programme is to build the capacity of District Assembly members to participate fully in the governance processes of the DA.

The objectives of the training programme are:

- To increase the capacity of Sub-Committee members to actively participate in deliberative sessions; and
- To enhance members understanding of the strategic issues related to governance.

As there are 3 separate modules to be delivered in different Districts, specific objectives will be developed for each module by the coordinator (for more details see sections 2 and 3)

## **2 Scope and Content of Training**

While there are numerous areas where the DA Sub-Committees require training, the following 3 areas have been identified as strategic interventions for DISCAP related to governance and sustainable management of water and sanitation services:

- Participatory Planning and M&E
- Communication and Deliberations with Citizens on Water Governance Issues
- Gender Equitable Resource Mobilization and Allocation

***Participatory Planning and M&E:*** Planning and M&E has typically been done by the District Administration, and participation of citizens is generally limited to areas receiving donor support. There is a gradual shift in planning and M&E occurring as a

result of increased interest in transparency and social accountability. This training module will aim to increase the awareness of members of this committee on basic principles of participatory planning and M&E, focusing on the use of results from socially accountable M&E tools that are being utilized in Districts to engage citizens in discussions of poverty reduction and provision of basic services. With an emphasis on training members of the Executive Committee, participants will be able to appreciate their role as initiators in the planning process, linking communities to the technical services that they deserve.

Building on the experience and information gathered in the Decentralized M&E exercise this training will initially focus on the 3 M&E pilot Districts and will work with the Executive Committees to incorporate the results of the M&E exercise into the Annual Action Plan and ultimately the next Medium Term Development Plan. This module will build the capacity of the sub-committees to demand accountability for investment made for poverty reduction, by linking them up with techniques and the results of community assessments. The transparency aspect of the training will include focus on the access to information about priorities, plans and budgets of the DA.

***Communication and Deliberations with Citizens on Water Governance Issues:*** Decisions in the District Assemblies are often influenced by stakeholders from the District Administration, including the DCE. Resources for DA meetings are inadequate and the issues to be discussed beyond the scope of the time allocated for meetings. This results in decisions being made quickly, without communication with citizens or full deliberation by DA members. With the goal of building the capacity of DA members to deliberate on an issue fully, this module will focus on the introduction of new By-Laws and Water Board Constitutions that have been developed as part of the DISCAP Water Optimization Model. The DAs that are affected by the model (2 per region) will be guided through these By-Laws and Constitutions and encouraged to hold full discussions on the implications of them, both within and outside the Assembly. The aim of this module is to demonstrate how by-laws should be developed and passed, using the water sector as a case study.

***Gender Equitable Resource Mobilization and Allocation:*** A practical case study of the water and sanitation sector will be the basis for this training. Focusing on members of the Finance and Administration (F&A) Sub-Committee this training will explore the concepts of gender sensitive resource mobilization and allocation utilizing a case study of the water and sanitation sector. Through this module, members of the F&A Sub-Committee will understand the basis of consumer payments for water and sanitation, how resources can be mobilized from users, and different types of tariffs, all through a gender lens. The concept of budgets will be explored, including: how budgets are an expression of an organization's priorities and an examination of the GoG's policies related to allocation of resources to water and sanitation (e.g. percentage of DA Common Fund to be allocated to water and sanitation). A small number of Districts who have excelled in implementing the District Gender Strategy (yet to be determined) will be selected to participate in this module.

### 3 Methodology

Due to the focused nature of the training modules and limited resources (human and financial) the interventions will be focused on specific Districts (as outlined above). Once the modules have been implemented they will be followed up by some community radio programmes that share the results of the training with other Districts (budget and time permitting).

Each module will be implemented separately, with a lead person/organization coordinating the development and implementation of the module. The coordinator will work with stakeholders from RPCUs and DAs who will assist in the development and delivery of the training. This approach will ensure the training builds upon the skills and knowledge that already exist in this area, as well as building the capacity within the RPCUs and DAs to deliver subsequent trainings. It is anticipated that a training of trainers will be part of the process.

#### ***Creating a DISCAP Participatory Toolkit for Governance Training***

Using experiential games, role play, drama, discussion at all levels, DISCAP will work with different groups, and interfaces between groups, to increase conceptual understanding of governance issues including:

- How to seek, obtain, select and use information for better decision-making, including how to communicate these upward and downwards through the DA system.
- Setting up and strengthening community, area/district feedback mechanisms - community score cards/ citizens report cards, regular radio announcements.
- Representativeness – what does it mean to be a representative? What are ones responsibilities? How to represent well. Conferring before, informing afterwards.
- Choosing and using information channels (formal and informal) for different advocacy purposes. E.g. Community radio, citizens report/score cards, festivals and community/district/national events.
- Tracking action – monitoring and reviewing how, and the extent to which, civil society voice affects services, planning, approaches.
- How to incorporate gender equity into different aspects of governance, particularly financial management areas.
- Mobilizing resources in a manner that is gender equitable, pro-poor, yet financially sustainable.
- Deliberating on issues related to by-laws and effective functioning of systems and services.

#### ***3.1 Review Committee***

A committee comprised of RPCU officers, DCEs and DA members (gender balanced) will be established to provide oversight and guidance to the process. They will be invited to consult on the process at different times, focusing on the content of the modules, ensuring that it is relevant for DAs. Committee meetings will be called by DISCAP on an as needed basis.

#### ***3.2 Role of the Coordinator***

Once the coordinators have been identified they will work with the DISCAP Senior Training Specialist to develop a workplan. The workplan which will be approved by the Review Committee will address the following:

- Training approach,
- Selection of participants,
- Involvement of Regional and District stakeholders,

- Training plan (what, when, where, how, and who),
- How gender issues will be addressed as a cross cutting theme, and
- Budgetary requirements.

Once approved by the Review Committee the Coordinator will implement the workplan reporting to the DISCAP STS on a regular basis.

## **4 Implementation Approach**

In a context where supply rarely meets demand, feedback, questions and critiques and suggestions are frequently experienced by governance structures as attacks. Feelings of helplessness then lead to ‘attacks back’ or inertia. Where channels and systems for feedback are lacking, the voices of civil society can seem shrill and unwieldy and be poorly processed and expressed. This component will seek to enable the ‘users’ and ‘suppliers’ of services to structure dialogue so that it is constructive, and to identify outcomes that are manageable, rewarding and reassuring for both the ‘demand’ and ‘supply’ side. The idea of ‘message’ (voice, rhythm) and ‘response’ (reply, echo) will be used at all levels to help participants focus on the interplay between listening and speaking, as well as the need to shape a coherent voice and a coherent response based on sound principles of representation – seeking out and listening to all voices, building consensus, informing, and responding with action. The reciprocal responsibilities and changing roles of civil society and government in giving voice and responding to each other will be highlighted.

Literacy will not be assumed, thus embracing the voices of some of the most marginalized stakeholders in DA decision making. This implies researching, identifying and using information channels and systems at each level. Participatory techniques and targeted topics will be used to address each stakeholder group at their level of capacity and needs (See Box for a vision of some of the topics and techniques that might be considered in developing the Participatory Toolkit).

## **5 Conclusion**

The proposed approach aims to build the capacity of DA members in certain strategic areas, those relevant to the DISCAP mandate. It is anticipated that the skills and knowledge obtained by participants will be applied in other areas.