

## 4. Evidence and Social Accountability from Civil Society to Ensure No One is Left Behind

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Social accountability approaches to governance have been celebrated as complementary and supportive of interventions focused on public accountability, civil service reform and public financial management. The approach involves several actors in public decision-making: citizens and civil society actors (civil society organizations (CSOs)) as well as the State. Successful integration of these actors leads to a more transparent, participatory, and accountable State. While social accountability mechanisms can be initiated by any of the actors in the sphere, they are usually demand-driven, initiated by CSOs and/or citizens.

Oxfam led a session to bring out examples and showcase work of various actors in the space, mainly from the African continent. The main presenters for this session were Seble Tweldebirhan, Oxfam in Ethiopia; Mohammad-Anwar Sadat Adam, Oxfam in Ghana; Stefano D'Errico, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED); and Sully Gariba, Innovations for Poverty Action, Ghana.

### **FEMALE FOOD HERO, ETHIOPIA**

Ethiopia continues to be severely affected by food insecurity and high poverty rates, in spite of the fact that Ethiopia met its Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme obligations by allocating more than 10 percent of the national budget to the agriculture sector. Women face gender-specific constraints that reduce their productivity and limit their contributions to agricultural production, economic growth and the well-being of their families and communities. Elimination of gender inequality and closing the gender gap in the agriculture sector are essential factors in improving development and food security. Oxfam in Ethiopia is leading a number of programmes to address these issues, including advocacy efforts aimed at influencing agriculture policy and implementation, narrowing the gender gap in agriculture and improving budget tracking systems.

Oxfam's advocacy efforts focus on two key tactics, allowing the work to take place within the restricted civil society space of Ethiopia: (1) research and analysis, including a gender-disaggregated agriculture expenditure analysis and a budget tracking study; and (2) the "Female Food Heroes Award" initiative, which includes annual awards recognizing 11 female small-scale food producers for their contributions to addressing food insecurity, raising

government and public awareness of the contributions and challenges faced by women farmers, and creating a space for women farmers to advocate for themselves.

The data and key findings of the budget analysis research are shared with civil society partners and key stakeholders, incorporated in a week-long training provided for the award winners and part of dialogues with the media and policymakers. Both of these streams of work involve close engagement with the Ethiopian Government. The efforts have been underway for several years now and Oxfam outlines lessons learned and challenges faced in developing the budget-tracking and gender-disaggregated analysis data, educating target stakeholders and engaging women farmers, other members of civil society and key members of the Government in using this data to contribute to improved policy and implementation.

### SLUM DWELLER MAPPING, KENYA

Slum dwellers have mapped and documented their informal settlements, including the people and businesses, to make themselves matter to city authorities and negotiate better living conditions within the slums. The urban poor are often better able than city and government departments to produce relevant, up-to-date, detailed data about their settlements through surveys and mapping. This kind of activity means the poor get their voices heard and respected and can work with governments to help solve the problems they face. People living in informal settlements often lack formal addresses and identification documents. Because of this situation, they are not considered legal citizens by governments and are denied public services such as health care, education, sanitation and the rule of law. Therefore, producing data and evidence about people living in slums and their living conditions is of paramount importance to make city governments accountable.

### SOCIAL IMPACT OF PROTECTED AREAS, KENYA

The social impact of protected areas in terms of both benefits and costs has been a matter of fierce debate for a long time. This is also due to the use of different approaches to assess impact and reference to different standards. IIED, together with the International Union for Conservation of Nature, has reviewed around 30 different tools and methods that have been or could be used to assess the social impacts of protected areas. Thus, they have developed a relatively simple low-cost methodology to assess both the positive and negative effects of protected areas on the living communities living within and around it: the Social Assessment of Protected Areas (SAPA). The assessment is designed to help managers of protected areas and other key stakeholder groups, including community groups, to increase and more equitably share benefits and reduce costs. The methodology can be applied to any type of protected area, including those owned and managed by communities themselves and private sector actors, as well as those that are state owned or managed. The SAPA methodology manual has been downloaded more than 1,000 times from the IIED website and has been widely used by stakeholders managing and living in protected areas. The evidence produced with this cost-effective and robust method has been used to make local authorities accountable to the principles endorsed by the World Parks Congress in 2003: that protected areas

should strive to reduce poverty—and certainly in no way exacerbate it—and that their costs and benefits should be equitably shared.

The session reported the findings emerging from the use of SAPA and highlighted in the paper, “Understanding the social impact of protected areas: a community perspective”.

## OIL4AGRICULTURE, GHANA

In Ghana, Oxfam has been working together and in collaboration with organized civil society and non-governmental organization partners aimed at catalysing increased public investment in agriculture to secure, improve and sustain the productivity, resilience and well-being of women and other smallholder farmers, their households and communities. The programme has over the last four years contributed to the emergence of a vibrant and highly capable community of civil society working on budget monitoring and social accountability issues within the agriculture sector in Ghana. Drawing on the experience of the Oil4Agriculture initiative, the presentation provided evidence on the work of Oxfam partners in monitoring critical aspects of petroleum revenue allocation and management, connecting to public budget monitoring and social accountability efforts, and the results achieved in the broader agriculture advocacy work in Ghana.

The presentation outlined the processes, strategies, results, promising practices and lessons learned in relation to the Oil4Agriculture initiative. It concluded with recommendations on how to integrate lessons and promising practices from civil society evaluations into national systems. Some questions were also raised on how national systems and monitoring and evaluation can cope with the advocacy dimensions which are central to organized civil society evaluations.

## PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT AND DEMAND FOR ACCOUNTABILITY, GHANA

The interface between community aspirations and public policy oversight often seems a far-fetched proposition. However, recent development interventions and the use of social accountability techniques have fostered a growing trend of CSOs building solidarity with representative Parliaments to hold governments and service providers accountable for their performance in improving service delivery to the poor.

In Ghana, a baseline conducted by civil society revealed that services to selected marginalized groups (i.e., women, children and persons with disabilities) are generally weak in rural poor districts. Moreover, most of the marginalized citizens who are the prime targets for these services are unable to exercise their demand for service improvements due to lack of capacity to gather and present credible evidence about their needs and the quality and the appropriateness of services they receive. Even where demand for service improvements are placed, the service delivery agencies are unresponsive to these demands due to poor attitude, knowledge and practices of service providers towards the most marginalized citizens.

CSOs can improve the capacity of marginalized people to collect and analyse evidence; triangulate and verify these with duty bearers who provide basic services, such as health

care; and establish partnership with parliamentary committees that have oversight for the rendering of these services. Evidence supports this work, detailing that in five of Ghana's poorest districts, performance in delivering quality health services has been impaired on the one hand by the lack of common standards/benchmarks for service providers to assess service quality; and on the other by marginalized groups and socially-excluded groups lacking the skills to generate and analyse evidence on the quality and appropriateness of services they receive from duty bearers, so that they are unable to engage these service providers for necessary improvements.

By sharing skills in evidence-gathering and advocacy with local government bodies and parliamentary committees responsible for health, the increased awareness of these three groups raised the issues of services for the poor to the highest levels of decision-making, through the use of the civil society-generated evidence for parliamentary oversight of National Health Insurance in Ghana.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

An exploration of how social accountability strategies can further equitable development policy and practice is an important pathway to strengthen our overall development practice. Social accountability sits at the intersection of civil society, government performance-based accountability systems and evaluation. There are lessons and challenges emerging from processes that have used robust evidence and advocacy strategies to inform and engage the public, scale up citizen voice, influence policymaking and reform and build robust feedback loops. There are strategies that can empower social accountability actors, including focusing on more collaborative and constructive engagement methods rather than utilizing confrontational strategies only.