

CEADZ

Social Accountability Brief: *Successes, Lessons and Promising practices in improving citizen driven accountability*

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Introduction

The Civic Engagement for Accountability and Democracy in Zimbabwe (CEADZ) is a four-year program, currently in its third year of implementation. The program seeks to increase the influence of Zimbabwean citizens, acting collectively through formal and informal groups, for more democratic and accountable governance. To fulfil its objectives, CEADZ has been providing technical support to civic actors in Zimbabwe, mainly civil society organizations (CSOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs), to promote sustained civic-solution holder engagement for improved transparency, answerability, and accountability with notable success. The program's interventions are linked to the basic understanding that Social Accountability Monitoring (SAM) has the potential of increasing and sustaining citizens participation in governance processes to improve transparency and accountability at multiple levels. Social Accountability constitutes the range of measures and mechanisms—beyond the ballot box—that involve citizens in holding the state to account, i.e. justify and explain its actions, or lack thereof.

The CEADZ approach to SAM is underpinned by a rights-based approach to public resource management- a method developed, tested and pioneered by the Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM) at Rhodes University in Grahamstown South Africa. The PSAM approach places Social Accountability to tackling systemic dysfunction rather than individual instances of corruption or mismanagement by focusing on strengthening the systems necessary to ensure effective public resource management (PRM). Considering this, it has theorized that there are five distinct processes of the public resource management framework and that these are “indispensable prerequisites for the realization of basic human needs within any state. The Social Accountability System is hinged on monitoring five interlinked and interconnected public resource management processes that are used by states to deliver services for their citizens. The five processes in monitoring Social Accountability, as conceptualized by PSAM, are Planning and Resource Allocation, Expenditure Management, Performance Management, Public Integrity Management and Oversight by the legislature and supreme audit institutions.

This brief seeks to document the successes of the CEADZ program's Social Accountability Monitoring advocacy interventions. The discussion paper provides a thematic presentation of results using an outcome mapping approach to documenting significant change. The approach focuses on major behavioral, attitudinal, and perceptual changes among boundary partners (stakeholders). The ensuing discussion is structured according to the introduction, defining the CEADZ understanding of SAM, followed by critical lessons drawn from implementing SAM activities under CEADZ and significant outcomes from CEADZ SAM interventions.

Defining Social Accountability

CEADZ understands Social Accountability as an approach towards establishing accountability relationships between citizens and governance institutions and actors, motivated by citizen participation, and sustained civic engagement. It produces opportunities, spaces, and platforms for citizens and their organizations to participate directly or indirectly in exacting accountability by promoting the practice of active and responsible citizenship¹. Social Accountability as the ‘demand-side’ accountability practice (often referred to as vertical and diagonal accountability mechanisms) complements the ‘supply-side’ accountability systems (often referred to as horizontal accountability mechanisms) making vertical and horizontal forms of accountability mutually reinforcing.

¹ Bousquet, Franck; Thindwa, Jeff; Felicio, Mariana; Grandvoinnet, Helene. 2012. Supporting Social Accountability in the Middle East and North Africa: Lessons from Transitions. MENA Knowledge and Learning Quick Notes Series; No. 53. World Bank, Washington, DC. © World Bank.

Central to Social Accountability is, therefore, the ability of citizens to hold the governance institutions and actors accountable and increase the effectiveness of their programs through a broad range of tools and actions which may include: Social audits, participatory budgeting, participatory planning, Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETs), Citizen/community scorecards and service charters. These actions help governance institutions and citizens to recognize their mutual responsibility in promoting just and accountable governance. Additionally, Social Accountability identifies its core as collective action and stresses the importance of the nature and inclusiveness of participation.

Critical lessons from CEADZ SAM Advocacy

The practice of Social Accountability under the CEADZ program reveals several critical lessons for citizen participation in local governance reforms. Lessons from these experiences have the potential to pursue changes in related policies and practices at the national level.

a) Access to information, coordination and awareness are the basic building blocks for Social Accountability: The level and quality of citizen agency and participation, to a larger extent, depends on the availability of reliable information, coordination of citizens' voices, awareness, and knowledge. While access to and freedom of information related to municipal policy, programs and decision-making processes are legally available in certain contexts it is considerably constrained in many other contexts. In the CEADZ context for example, information has been more controlled around election periods while geographically, rural areas and politically sensitive areas like resettlements have always limited information flows than larger urban areas where there are multiple information sources. In the latter contexts, CEADZ partners such as Kubatana, Center for Innovation and Technology (CITE) and Tell Zimbabwe have adopted various innovative means and ways to access and disseminate information to the citizens either themselves or through other government officials. Where the legal framework on Right to Information or Freedom of Information exists but citizens are not fully aware or there is a lack of willingness to publicize such information the municipalities and civil society need to find alternative means to proactively provide information which is crucial for citizens to claim developmental rights and entitlements. Organizing interface meeting between citizens and the relevant government officials to interact and share information related to government programs, plans, schemes which are relevant to the citizens is one such alternative. Context-driven disparities in access to information at the local level impede on the ability of civic action to exert significant pressure on state transparency and accountability at the national level.

Access to information, while essential, is just one part of the accountability continuum. Various partners located in different districts and contexts employ contextually specific Social Accountability tools and approaches. In addition, such actors engage with solution holders at multiple levels of the governance stratum. Such a setting promotes the compartmentalization of civil society efforts in SAM, fragmenting citizen voices in the push for transparency and accountability. If civil society accountability action is uncoordinated the bargaining power of citizen collective action is weakened. The need for coordination platforms and spaces is therefore central to effective SAM.

b) Working with both sides of the governance continuum produces better outcomes and multi-directional accountability relationships: Engagements between citizens, civil society and municipalities are fundamental issues in the success of Social Accountability practice. Yet given the limited history of such engagements in many contexts, it requires substantial investments in capacity development. Previous SAM intervention sought to elevate the position of citizens by investing in capacity development activities which sought to capacitate demand side actors to clamor for transparency and accountability. Such intervention not only created an

imbalance in the accountability scale but did not provide space for supply side actors to adequately respond to citizen demands creating fissures between supply-demand side actors.

Experience suggests that the capacity development interventions including training, workshops, hand-holding support, exposure visits and joint-reflections are appreciated by the councilors as these help in enhancing their understanding of democratic governance practices, citizen participation and Social Accountability. Women in Leadership Development's (WILD) experience of working in Matabeleland revealed that it is not only much easier to work on empowerment programs for young women in villages and wards under the jurisdiction of female traditional leaders and Councilors but also easier to get buy-in/support from male traditional leaders in other wards or villages when the organization ropes in these women leaders as project champions and leverages on its relationships with them to get entry into new areas, including areas where issues of strong patriarchal cultures and values has resulted in some traditional leaders being resistant to women and youth empowerment programs. Furthermore, the Institute for Young Women Development (IYWD) successfully managed to promote its women's empowerment and gender sensitive budgeting advocacy initiatives in some culturally conservative communities of Mashonaland Central by roping in female traditional leaders and District Administrators as project champions. Helpline has also made inroads into some politically restricted districts of the province, such as Shamva, by roping in some of the government employed Youth Officers as its project champions who are given slots to co-facilitate community engagement meetings with youth.² These have positive spill-over effect and contribute to subsequent interactions with citizens and civil society in finding solutions to the problems faced by citizens.

The results from many Social Accountability related practices thus reinforce the learning that working simultaneously on both the supply side and the demand side certainly produces better outcomes. For example, CCMT which provided capacity development training in Social Accountability to citizens, local councilors and rural district officials in Gokwe South resulted in supply and demand actors co-creating service delivery targets with citizens adopting a pro-active stance with regards the payment of rates, resulting in improved responsiveness by the local authority. In many instances, Social Accountability (vertical accountability) practices and outcomes contribute to strengthening the horizontal accountability between state institutions (e.g. between municipalities and line departments) as well as accountability within the institutions (e.g. municipalities).

c) Improving our understanding and analysis of conflicting incentives is key to SAM success: Collective-action theory displays that often, when citizens are faced with a shared challenge, they will not act in unison, in resolving the matter, even when multiple actors agree³. Each actor is embedded in a complex web of interests and incentives, arising from their closest relationships through to their furthest external influence. In a given context – such as a social-accountability project – these incentives will suddenly spur the actor to action, often in ways, we might not expect: to recruit others, to withdraw their involvement, to myriad ways of acting and interacting, which can lead to less than desirable results. This brings prominence to interlocutors, incentives, and the importance of interlocution in SAM. 'Interlocution' is the process of addressing the complex web of incentives and actions through actors selected for their 'game-changing' abilities. Those with the most to lose from these interactions are often the powerless and the marginalized, defined both in terms of the way they engage as citizens, and the authority that surrounds them, including that of the state. By embedding Applied Political Economy Analysis (APEA) and Power Mapping into SAM, CEADZ partners used such expertise to align mutually beneficial service delivery issues to both supply and demand-side actors.

² CEADZ Youth Rights Cluster Meeting, 2019; CEADZ Social Accountability Cluster Meeting, 2018.

³ Nico Carpentier (2016) Beyond the Ladder of Participation: An Analytical Toolkit for the Critical Analysis of Participatory Media Processes, *Javnost - The Public*, 23:1, 70-88, DOI: 10.1080/13183222.2016.1149760

Evidence from CEADZ reports further reveals that how a project factors incentives is critical to its reception by both public officials and communities, particularly in politically sensitive environments such as the politically restricted provinces of Zimbabwe like Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East and Mashonaland West.⁴ In order to effectively implement projects in such politically restricted provinces, CEADZ partners have not only leveraged on their networks with key local leaders who include local chiefs and some local district officials but also changed the framing of their project objectives to emphasize issues that have community traction such as accountability in natural resource governance.⁵ In most natural resource-rich regions like Manicaland, Midlands, Matabeleland North and Matabeleland South, community stakeholders, including local community leaders, are often supportive of projects promoting improvements in the management and use of revenue from the exploitation of natural resources in their areas because they strongly feel that their communities are not currently benefiting.⁶

However, some CEADZ social-accountability projects largely fell short in acknowledging the dynamic nature of these incentive-driven power plays, pursuing instead a technical process which is removed from the contextual reality in which the citizens and state actors operate and so the notion of citizen empowerment quickly lost its strength.

d) Better design and implementation of Social Accountability tools can lead to better articulation, meaningful interface and improved responses: Successful social accountability interventions for civil society require maintaining a delicate balance between providing citizens with accurate and verified information to enable them to monitor service delivery and actively monitoring and tracking the delivery of services by the service providers at both national and local government levels. Review of practices on Social Accountability by CEADZ sub-partners often reveals that while several initiatives focus mostly on mobilization and training of citizens for SAM, only a few initiatives focus on monitoring of services at local, district and national levels. Interventions which use structured and/or semi-structured tools, such as PETs, for monitoring of service delivery tend to better identify, articulate, and communicate service deficits to service providers. A case in point is that of Zimbabwe Christian Alliance (ZCA), which used CSCs to track public expenditure on health delivery in Hurungwe districts with notable success. Striking a balance, in practice, between the technical know-how of using specific Social Accountability tools and political mobilization of citizens is crucial. While a technically sound Social Accountability tool may generate a great amount of citizen feedback and related data in a rather short period, the participation of citizens may be somewhat limited to being passive information providers, unless it is factored in the intervention design. Community ownership and inclusion through collective analyses, reflections and action must be augmented.

⁴ See CEADZ Baseline Political Economy Analysis, 2018.

⁵ CEADZ Youth Rights Cluster Learning Meeting, 2019.

⁶ CEADZ Baseline APEA, 2018.

e) The strategic use of media (online and offline) is essential in reinforcing SAM

advocacy practices: For either civil society or the media to be effective in holding duty bearers to account, and to equip citizens to hold public officials to account, they have to work collaboratively in their efforts. What is required is a move from the assumption that simply reporting on/or highlighting events of maladministration or mismanagement of public resources is sufficient. Highlighting poor resource management is necessary but not sufficient to equate to Social Accountability. Current media coverage by CEADZ partners, while extensive and voluminous, does not provide citizens with the contextual knowledge they need to effectively hold duty bearers to account for poor service delivery. Rather, because of the formulaic reporting style, corruption and maladministration are further normalized. Fostering a more strategic, conscious, and direct relationship between civil society and the media will ensure a mutual relationship of effective Social Accountability resulting in better public resource management. Recently in Zimbabwe, digital media platforms have been key in achieving short-term gains by exposing - naming and shaming - corrupt practices by state institutions and actors during the COVID-19 pandemic. Sub-partners such as Tell Zimbabwe, Habakkuk Trust, Kubatana, CITE and Zimbabwe Christian Alliance used digital platforms to expose government corruption and graft, which played a critical role in exerting pressure on the state to take action in addressing the abuse of public funds by the Minister of Health. While naming and shaming are not sufficient in providing sustained systemic change, if leveraged correctly it can help augment incremental gains towards institutionalizing Social Accountability within government.

Tell Zimbabwe published investigative stories that exposed the Municipality of Masvingo for pumping unsafe water to communities. The detailed report prompted the local authority to appoint a commission of inquiry and to purchase additional chemicals (Aluminum Sulphate) following the exposure. Masvingo City went on to call for a press conference to explain the steps they were taking to ensure the safety of the water which was being pumped. The authorities went on to take a tour of the Masvingo waterworks plant. The investigative story created an opportunity for promoting transparency, accountability, and dialogue as well as improving the quality of water supply in Masvingo.

f) Local-level accountability has the potential to promote sustained community engagement, inclusion and solution-holder responsiveness compared to the national level:

The complexity of national governance issues and processes results in a despondent and disengaged citizenry. Coupled with weak accountability mechanisms and institutions compounded by the lack of political will by elites to address corruption results in a disenchanting citizenry with a remote interest in national issues about transparency and accountability. However, the opposite is true. Transparency and accountability discussions seem to thrive more at community level given the intimate connections communities have with local issues, actors, and institutions. Engagement at the local level appears to be more robust depending on the issues and incentives associated with relevant conversations happening at the grassroots. The emphasis by citizens on local issues has come at the expense of key accountability issues at national level with supreme oversight institutions, like the Auditor General's office, receiving limited support from civic actors in stemming graft. A suitable example of this is the case of TIZ's petitions campaign in Mabvuku and Sunningdale (Harare). In both cases, TIZ first conscientized project participants about their constitutional rights to petition solution holders and then trained them on how to write petitions. Following these pieces of training the project participants from Mabvuku, who had not been receiving water from the municipality for over two years, and Sunningdale, who were aggrieved by corruption in the municipality's allocation of housing stands in their neighborhood, proceeded to recruit their neighbors and presented petitions to the Harare City Council. After receiving these petitions, the Harare Municipality started to supply water to the neighborhood for at least twice a week and set up a committee, including residents of Sunningdale, to investigate the allocations of houses and housing stands in the neighborhood.

Moreover, residents also started to organize themselves to engage more solution holders and duty bearers over some local challenges such as municipal police's extortion of bribes and confiscation of goods from traders and the school officials' soliciting of bribes from guardians for the admission of pupils into local primary and secondary schools with notable success.

Significant Outcomes

This section of the document explores some of the results achieved through CEADZ interventions. The discussion will focus on notable changes in behavior, attitude and perception in both citizens and solution-holders. The use of different accountability tools with the citizens and the municipal authorities and their regular interactions with each other brought about some significant changes. It presented opportunities for unique partnerships to flourish and paved the way for a more participatory system of local governance. Some of the broad results of these processes can be explained as follows.

a) Enhanced capacities of citizens: The capacities of citizens to get organized, collectively identify gaps in service delivery through Social Accountability practices and raising demands for improving these services was enhanced during CEADZ. Citizens got opportunities to get deeper insights into their contextual realities and thereby participate more constructively with the authorities. When their perceptions about municipal services were supported by factual data collected by them, they faced the authorities with more conviction and ownership. Their arguments to improve service delivery became much sharper and their capacities to negotiate and dialogue with elected representatives and officials also enhanced considerably. For example, organizations such as the Center for Conflict Management and Transformation (CCMT) trained communities on the fundamentals of Social Accountability. In addition, the organization set up community action groups to self-mobilize and hold the Gokwe South rural district council accountable. In so doing, community groups engaged relevant officials to furnish them with council strategic plans, budgets statements, expenditure details etc. to ensure the municipality justified and explained its decisions in the use of public resources. This resulted in the local authority being more responsive and inclusive of citizens in the planning, resource allocation, expenditure, and performance management processes. Another example is the case of the Zimbabwe Christian Alliance, which also trained communities in monitoring Social Accountability. Using tools such as citizen report cards and social audits, the organization, in partnership with community members, identified two advocacy issues, health and education, to monitor access, affordability, and quality of these services against the public resources available to the Hurungwe local authority. The adoption of a public resource management approach to Social Accountability ensured ZCA used evidence in assessing the performance of duty bearers providing objective feedback for improved service delivery. To buttress this, communities independently collected and analyzed the evidence and used the data for dialogue and engagement purposes with service providers. Resultantly, the local authority incorporated members of the community action team into decision making structures forging lasting connections with citizens in the formulation of solutions to common service delivery problems.

b) Enhanced capacities of municipal authorities: The understanding of municipal authorities improved significantly as they became aware of the concepts of Social Accountability. Through regular capacity development support, local authority actors were not only informed about the Social Accountability tools like citizen charters, public grievance redressal systems and information disclosures tools but also supported in implementing them. As municipalities gradually started to adopt these tools, they became more capable of responding to the needs of their citizens. For example, CCMT roped in both elected and appointed officials from the Gokwe South RDC when providing trainings and feedback meetings, respectively. Whenever the organization hosted trainings and feedback meetings, it ensured the inclusion of key interlocutors in the discussions. This resulted in the local authority setting up a gender committee in its

structures to ensure gender-centered responses to service delivery challenges, the committee was the first of its kind since the establishment of Gokwe South as a Rural District Council.

c) Increased transparency, answerability, and accountability: With citizens using tools like the citizen report cards, social audits, community scorecards and monitoring basic services on their own to further raise demands in interface meetings, notable results were documented. The most notable one was improved transparency and responsiveness by municipalities in certain

As part of their CEADZ supported activities, the Center for Conflict Management and Transformation (CCMT) implemented training in Social Accountability Monitoring. Equipped with this knowledge Youth and Women Community Lobby Groups (YWCLGs) in Gokwe systematically collected evidence, including documents and voice recordings, of corruption in the distribution of land and nepotism in the tender process within the Rural District Council (RDC). Their initiatives resulted in the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission instituting investigations that led to the arrest of the Town Secretary.

districts. This was also the result of sustained dialogue and engagement, through public meetings, with solution holders and their sensitization towards the use and adoption of Social Accountability tools such as citizen charters, community scorecards and citizen report cards. A strategic combination in the use of these tools on the supply and demand sides assisted in reaching a stage where both state and non-state actors complemented each other in increasing responsiveness towards citizens' needs and improved service delivery which was absent before. This is best illustrated by the works of organizations such as IYWD, CCJP-Masvingo, Habakkuk Trust and EFZ. A good example is the case of the Evangelical Fellowship in Zimbabwe. Using community-centered accountability tools such as town hall meetings and citizen scorecards, the organization leveraged its position in the community as a faith-based movement to establish trust and buy-in from the local authority. Through trust and social capital, the organization unlocked and established relationships

with key decision-makers within the local council which in return provided them with access to key documents essential in promoting transparency and accountability. Leveraging on trust, the local authority utilized platforms provided by EFZ to engage with communities and co-create service delivery solutions, with citizen input, which allowed for a mutually beneficial relationship between citizens and duty bearers to flourish resulting in citizen-centered and responsive service delivery.

Another example is drawn from the work of TIZ in Mabvuku and Sunningdale (Harare). In both cases, TIZ first conscientized project participants about their constitutional rights to petition solution holders and then trained them on how to write petitions. Following these trainings, the project participants from Mabvuku, who had not been receiving water from the municipality for over two years, and Sunningdale, who were aggrieved by corruption in the municipality's allocation of housing stands in their neighborhood, proceeded to recruit their neighbors and presented petitions to the Harare City Council. After receiving these petitions, the City Council began supplying water to the neighborhood at least twice a week and set up a committee, including residents of Sunningdale, to investigate the allocations of houses and housing stands in the neighborhood.

d) Improved relationships between citizens and local authorities: The use of community centered Social Accountability tools and approaches enabled citizens to collectively gather and critically analyze evidence and identify service delivery gaps for engagement with public officials. Interface and dialogue meetings created a conducive environment and helped in bridging the gap between citizens and authorities where important issues were deliberated, and solutions were arrived at. These interactions, which had limited impact before, created a much-required space for engagement and sharing of ideas that transformed the way citizens viewed local authorities and vice-versa.

e) Increased women and youth inclusion in decision making structures: The starting point for interventions in Social Accountability projects should be the nuancing of the diverse ways in which citizenship, marginality and accountability manifest themselves in different political contexts. It is these nuances – of political, economic, and social interactions and bargaining processes – that also reveal the agency possibilities, identifying the interlocution processes and how they can be supported. The participation of women, youth and other marginalized groups must be ensured by mainstreaming their issues and concerns in the overall framework and practice of Social Accountability. Interventions which consider these aspects have better potential to contribute to enhanced participation of marginalized groups. Therefore, the choice of services and issues to be monitored should also be made in a way that encourages the participation of women and other marginalized groups.

Using the Public Resource Management approach to SAM, TIZ ensured citizens engaged with Members of Parliament on the use of Community Development Funds through community feedback meetings organized by Transparency International Zimbabwe (TIZ) on radio. Outcome harvesting assessments conducted by TIZ after these feedback meetings revealed that community members in the project areas reported increased transparency on the use of CDF by elected officials following the broadcasts. Proactive residents in some of the communities where TIZ had conducted these meetings, such as Mabvuku in Harare, have proceeded to form ward-based social audit teams to monitor how their MPs use CDF funds.

Using citizen empowerment methods such as training and continued mentoring and coaching, CEADZ partners increased the capacity of citizens to demand and articulate desired changes to governance processes. The capacitation of citizens at the local level created a critical mass of responsible citizens with an appetite for local governance issues. A key characteristic of the demographic profile of empowered citizens was its distinct composition of women and youth. Building on the aspect of citizen inclusion embedded in Social Accountability Monitoring approaches, local authorities, in institutionalizing social accountability co-opted trained women and youth into decision making structures such as Ward Development Committees (WADCOS) and Village Development Committees (VIDCOS). CCMT, through its Social Accountability project, successfully pushed for the inclusion of women and youth into WADCOS in Gokwe south. Also, Habakkuk Trust successfully bargained for the inclusion of women as assessors in traditional courts in Nkayi and Lupane. These and other successes buttress the potential of Social Accountability approaches in deepening local democratic governance processes.

Another case in point is experience from the Center for Gender and Community Development in Zimbabwe (CGCDZ) where a large proportion of mine workers, aliens, at Bikita Minerals Mine become destitute after their tenure with the mine. As a result of this situation, an informal settlement with former mine workers had developed just outside the mine. CGCDZ, through the CEADZ program, undertook a series of dialogue meetings on service delivery involving solution holders, duty bearers and residents of Bikita Minerals. It is in one of the service delivery meetings with mine authorities and council representatives that included the elected councilor that current and former mine workers raised the issue of lack housing stands for the miners and their families' post-retirement. The issue was later taken to the full council meeting and discussed, and the

council agreed to sell land to the miners through the company. A housing scheme was then initiated through the mine workers committee. Through Social Accountability and advocacy work, Bikita Rural District Council availed land which was serviced in 2019 and completed in 2020.

The CEADZ Social Accountability Monitoring Community of Practice

Given the importance of a well-functioning state and healthy interactions with citizens, development partners have treated governance as a sector in its own right. Projects ranging from public sector management reform to civil society strengthening, to democratization and SAM have become a key piece in African governance discourse. With increased support towards SAM interventions and the concomitant increasing complexity of the ecosystem, there is a need to provide a meeting point for diverse practitioners to collectively reflect and troubleshoot through the sharing of experiences. The desire to coordinate SAM efforts birthed the idea of a SAM community of practice (SAMCOP) which seeks to achieve the following:

- (1) to provide a platform for sustained engagement and cross-learning among SAM practitioners in Zimbabwe
- (2) enhance access to information on public documents essential for civil society oversight and SAM on public resources management, and
- (3) create a repository of knowledge on key developments and global trends around SAM.

To access the community of practice please visit: <http://samcop.co.zw>