



Social Accountability in Southern Africa:

A Review of Policy and Practice in Public Resource Management in SADC, including Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and Tanzania

A summary report of the baseline study for the project:

'Strengthening Social Accountability and Oversight in Health and Agriculture in Southern Africa'

The Project

The project '*Strengthening Social Accountability and Oversight in Health and Agriculture in Southern Africa*' seeks to improve public service delivery in agriculture (food security), and health (HIV/AIDS, sexual and reproductive health and rights) by strengthening the oversight and social accountability roles of five target groups in the SADC region, specifically: selected parliamentary committees, relevant government departments, issue-based civil society organisations (CSOs), smallholder farmer organisations, and the media.

The project is being implemented by the Partnership for Social Accountability (PSA) Alliance, a consortium of organisations led by ActionAid International (AAI) and including the Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM) of Rhodes University, Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers' Forum (ESAFF) and SAfAIDS. With support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the first three year phase (2016-2019) of the project will focus on Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania and Mozambique; however it aims to expand to include the other SADC member states in subsequent phases

The Consortium and its local partners aim to enhance the effectiveness of the target groups by providing focused training, supporting critical monitoring, and offering platforms for collaboration and learning. Through simultaneously strengthening both state and civil society actors, the project endeavours to develop an environment for greater social accountability at the local, national and regional levels.

The project envisions that adoption and contextualisation of social accountability monitoring by national and regional actors will enhance the quality of decisions and actions of government departments on public resource management (PRM) related to health and agriculture. In the context of the Sustainable Development Goals and SADC's Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP), enhanced social accountability in public resource management is viewed as integral towards the eradication of poverty in the region.

As a Southern African regional initiative, the project recognises the mutual synergy between national and regional processes in influencing change. The project seeks to monitor and encourage the implementation of national policies and actions in health (HIV/AIDS and SRHR) and agriculture (food security), in line with SADC commitments, through facilitating and participating in both national and regional dialogue.

The project focuses on several key regional policy frameworks, including:

- SADC Regional Agricultural Policy (RAP) 2014
- SADC Regional CAADP Compact
- SADC Food and Nutrition Security Strategy (FNSS) 2015-2025
- SADC Integrated HIV, SRH, TB and Malaria Strategy and Business Plan, 2016-2020

The Baseline Report

The baseline report was commissioned by the PSA Alliance to document the state of play of social accountability across health and agriculture sectors at the regional SADC level and national levels in

the four target countries, including political and economic considerations. The baseline study, conducted in November and December 2015, has informed the definition of the project's target outcomes, indicators and the monitoring and evaluation of results.

This summary report provides an analysis of key issues at national and regional level, and provides a preliminary overview of the capacity issues affecting both supply and demand side actors.

Public Resource Management – A Five Process Cycle

Using a rights and evidence based approach to social accountability monitoring, the project focuses on the five inter-related processes of PRM: planning and resource allocation; expenditure management; performance monitoring; public integrity; and oversight.

The Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM) defines each of the processes as follows:

1. Planning and Resource Allocation

This process starts with the executive arm of government and senior managers responsible for public service delivery agencies drawing up detailed strategic plans. The plan for each agency acts as a road-map for line managers and informs all staff of the activities to be undertaken in order to deliver required public services, their timeframes and spending and performance targets.

The first step in drawing up an effective strategic plan requires managers to undertake an up-to-date analysis of the needs of those requiring public services (relative to an ideal concept of their human rights and capabilities). It also requires a detailed situation analysis of the challenges and resource constraints facing individual agencies. The needs analysis and situational analysis should identify, amongst others, the most pressing socio-economic needs to be addressed and the internal resource and capacity constraints affecting the agency's ability to address these needs. It should identify a set of clear activities required to address current needs and group these into clearly defined programmes.

Once the activities making up each programme have been identified and prioritised relative to pressing social and economic needs, these can then be costed. An authorised set of financial resources (a budget), human resources (staff) and infrastructural requirements can then be allocated to each programme via some form of legislature or community oversight mechanism and a set of measurable performance indicators identified to measure the achievement of programme outputs.

2. Expenditure Management

Once a budget has been allocated to an agency to implement the outputs and activities listed in its strategic plan, key duty-bearers (including the executive arm of government) need to track the spending of funds against the agency's approved budget and strategic plan.

For this purpose, line managers need to submit monthly spending reports to enable senior managers, including internal auditors, to identify risks in the effective management of funds and delivery of services. Heads of agencies should provide brief monthly and more detailed quarterly reports on spending to their executive authorities and to the Ministry of Finance. Executive authorities should stay updated on any under or overspending of funds and on any financial control weaknesses or other risks likely to affect the agency's delivery targets.

3. Performance Management

Once a budget has been allocated to an agency to implement the outputs and activities listed in its strategic plan, the executive and senior managers within the agency must report on their performance in implementing strategic plans and must explain and justify failed or ineffective performance and corrective steps taken. Performance agreements must be signed by all staff (based on planned outputs) and these should be reviewed throughout the financial year.

Among others, effective performance management requires a number of sub-systems within service delivery agencies. These include: an effective human resource management system; reliable financial and performance reporting mechanisms; effective monitoring and evaluation processes (including regular mechanisms for monitoring service delivery); an effective internal control environment; and, an effective risk management and internal audit function.

4. Public Integrity Management

The Executive and senior managers must ensure that public integrity management mechanisms are maintained within all agencies to both prevent and correct instances of the ineffective use and abuse of public resources (including cases of misconduct, inefficiency, maladministration, corruption and conflicts of interest). These include corrective mechanisms within departments such as human resource management directorates, disciplinary units, and disciplinary records, and preventive mechanisms designed to limit the scope for conflicts of interest and corruption, including codes of conduct and registers for the declaration of private interests by senior managers, members of the legislature and members of the executive.

5. Oversight

A rigorous independent audit should be conducted annually into each agency's financial and performance management by the state's supreme audit institution. Legislature committees and local assembly committees should scrutinise the agency's annual report along with audit findings, including any emphasis of matter and any recommendations for corrective action. Committees should then make recommendations to the head of the agency to improve financial or performance management and to enhance service delivery. These committees should monitor the implementation of their recommendations and corrective steps taken in response to supreme audit institution findings.



Key Issues and Trends

National Level

At the national level, the baseline study noted progressive and comprehensive legislation in all the countries of focus. It also identified, however, multiple issues in terms of implementation and enforcement. Additionally, the study described capacity gaps in all target groups, including government officials, parliamentarians, civil society (including smallholder farmers' organisations), and the media.

The specific issues noted for each PRM process were as follows:

Process 1: Planning & Resource Allocation

- While laws generally provide scope for public participation in national development processes, they do not obligate the state to regularly consult citizens in a substantive manner, resulting in limited meaningful consultation. A lack of knowledge or political will also leads to under implementation of provisions of national legislation on bottom-up, participatory planning and consultation processes. As a result, women and minority groups are frequently excluded from consultations.

- Lack of synchronisation in planning processes across geographic levels, from district, to province and national levels in planning processes. Although needs assessment processes at district level may be based on a bottom-up approach, the information gathered is not adequately filtered through to inform national processes and plans. Additionally, centralisation of planning and resource allocation processes at national level result in top-down prioritisation of targets and budget.
- Although there are efforts to harmonise planning and budget processes, poor linkages still exist, including weaknesses in ensuring resource allocation at the national level is in tandem with the planning process at the lower levels of government. Resource allocation based on overly optimistic revenue projections also adversely affect resources available to the sectors, leading to reliance on off-budget donor funding. Additionally, due to ineffective mechanisms for alignment of national budget to development plans, programmes are frequently financed outside plans.
- Despite the existence of notable comprehensive systems, gaps in institutional and human capacity create bottlenecks in implementation. For example, lower level government employees lack understanding on how to interpret allocations made at the national level, limiting their access to budget lines approved for their use.
- Parliamentarians are insufficiently capacitated (in terms of skills, resources and time) and in some cases have limited legislative scope to confidentially and effectively participate in and oversee the planning processes. Parliamentary involvement is often driven by the Executive. Parliamentary budget offices, designed to assist parliamentarians in understanding budgeting processes, do not yet exist in Tanzania and Malawi.
- Considerable political influence in planning, budgeting and prioritisation of issues;
- Insufficient financial resources in planning departments to allow them to perform their full range of responsibilities.
- Absence of clear guidelines on the process for participatory needs assessments, leading to inconsistency in such processes carried out by the Executive, Parliament and civil society;

Process 2: Expenditure Management

- Inconsistent engagement and understanding by CSOs in monitoring expenditure management, often due to challenges in understanding the structures, as well as difficulty in accessing expenditure reports;
- Fragmentation of expenditure management across different spheres of government due to weak capacity, and differing management and governance structures.
- Electronic systems while in place are challenged by insufficient IT infrastructure, unsatisfactory power supply, and lack of banking facilities and trained officials in some districts.
- Delays in reporting financial transactions, despite the legal provisions, making it difficult for government to internally monitor expenditure prior to the close of the financial year, as well as produce publically available sub-annual reporting.
- Role of the Parliament in approving financial reporting, budgetary changes and limiting debt is not fully executed. Discretion, in some cases, lies predominantly with the Minister of Finance.
- Expenditure reports often lack gender disaggregated figures, and as a result tracking of spending on women's needs is unclear.

Process 3: Performance Management

- Lack of legislative provisions governing performance management, or guidelines on how performance information should be aggregated to produce accurate programme based quarterly and annual reporting.
- Lack of follow up on issues highlighted by Auditor Generals and parliamentary committees, and a weak link between these institutions and the law enforcement agencies.
- Despite the existence of sufficient monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, collection and flow of data against key indicators remains a challenge due to delays in submission of required information. In some cases, a lack of legislation governing performance management disincentives reporting.
- Inconsistent conducting of staff appraisals in government departments.
- Insufficient knowledge of the existing mechanisms, and capacity to gather sufficient evidence to enable critical civil society monitoring.
- Civil society organisations encounter difficulties accessing performance management related information.

Process 4: Public Integrity

- While legislation exists, there is limited enforcement, including on producing declarations on conflict of interest. The absence of effective internal audit and risk management functions undermines the identification and investigation of possible maladministration, fraud and corruption.
- Lack of provisions on the process of implementing corrective action, or where disciplinary measures are provided they are insufficiently enforced.
- Little systematic coordination and cooperation between various agencies and institutions responsible for preventative and corrective action processes.
- Inadequate funding and restricted mandates constrain anti-corruption agencies and audit offices to more effectively carry out their responsibilities.
- Challenges in accessing appropriate information, due in some cases to a lack of effective access to information legislation, to allow CSOs and the media to obtain information and track corrective steps taken.

Process 5: Oversight

- Limited capacity of Parliament to adequately fulfil oversight roles, particularly in terms of the analytical ability of members, access to information and data, and lack of research support services available.
- Insufficient time availed to parliamentary committees to scrutinise documents and reports.
- Lack of independence of supreme audit institutions from the Executive, including in appointments and budget allocations
- Weak mechanisms to ensure there is response to audit queries, and to compel the implementation of recommendations by ministers and government departments.
- Inadequate financial resources, IT and equipment to enable supreme audit institutions to timeously perform their work.
- Delays in producing audit reports, undermining the usefulness of findings in addressing issues in a timely manner.

Regional Level

While various issues were identified at the Southern Africa regional level, the following two key issues of concern for the project were related to performance management and oversight:

- SADC Member States are not obligated to regularly report on the implementation of SADC instruments (protocols, policies, strategies). There is no formal mechanism for tracking national implementation.
- SADC does not have an independent legislative oversight body hence limiting the scope for regional oversight work. The SADC Parliamentary Forum plays an advisory role, rather than providing oversight.

Recommendations for Strengthening Capacity

The baseline study recommended the project's five target groups - government departments, parliamentary committees, issue-based CSOs, smallholder farmers' organisations and media – could be supported in various ways to improve their respective roles in public resource management and social accountability monitoring.

Issue-based CSOs and Smallholder Farmers' Organisations: Civil society can play a vital role ensuring social accountability and effective oversight of public resource management. In many instances, engagement with civil society is provided for in international, regional and national level legislation and policy, and provision made for bottom-up consultation, decision-making and monitoring of national and local development policy.

The baseline report identified the need to strengthen civil society capacity in specific areas:

- Advocacy skills to enable CSOs to interact with government and parliamentarians to demand their participation in needs assessment for development planning and budgeting processes as provided for in national legislation.
- Understanding of local and national budgeting for development planning, to undertake systematic budget tracking and analysis in the SRHR, HIV and AIDS and food security sectors. There is a need to focus on building capacity to participate directly in national, local and eventually regional (SADC) budgeting processes.
- Capacity for evidence-based engagement with needs assessment in the SRHR, HIV and AIDS and food security sectors to build the capacity of civil society organisations to participate directly in needs assessment processes as the basis for effective and socially accountable strategic planning.
- Organisational capacity to enable CSOs to mobilise the groups and communities they represent to participate in needs assessments and use tools such as community scorecards and other tools to prepare social accountability reports.
- Organisational capacity to address gender inequalities and incorporate a gender analysis in needs assessments, and oversight of government processes.
- Organisational capacity assessments of the individual issue-based CSOs and farmers' associations selected to be involved in the project to ensure capacity building responds directly to their specific needs.

Parliamentary Committees: Parliamentary committees and their staff (particularly, committees for agriculture, health, HIV and AIDS, nutrition, budget and finance and public accounts) play a key oversight role in the management of public resources. At the district level, this oversight role is also played by local councils.

The baseline findings, however, have indicated a need for increased knowledge and capacity to fulfil this role, in particular:

- Appropriate capacity-building programmes for parliamentary committees to strengthen their oversight capacities in all five processes of the social accountability system, from planning and resource allocation, to expenditure management, scrutiny of the performance of government service providers and quality of services, to oversight of corrective measures in case of misuse of resources.
- Support and mentoring of individual members of parliamentary committees to gain the knowledge and understanding of existing legislation and processes to apply oversight of PRM in a systematic manner. This includes enhancing capacity of committees to analyse and incorporate gender issues in oversight roles.
- Practical support for the provision of research and documentation for evidence-based decision making.
- Encourage parliamentary involvement in the development of strategic plans at constituency level, including monitoring and fact-finding visits by Members of Parliament.

Government Departments: Government departments in the four target countries, including those Ministries responsible for health, agriculture and food security as well as those responsible for finance and planning, are on the frontline of public resource management. The baseline findings have identified a need to ensure that government decision-making from district, to provincial and national level is more coordinated, participatory, upholds rights, is pro-poor, and uses gender based planning and budgeting analyses. Links between national government and the SADC secretariat are also crucial given the key role played by SADC regional strategic plans and policies that inform many national level approaches.

Specific recommendations included:

- Facilitate building improved relationships between government and civil society to create the conditions for positive government responses at district and national level for increased participation of citizens including CSOs in local level needs assessment, planning processes and resource allocation.
- Training and capacity building with targeted government officials to build knowledge, skills and understanding of PRM processes and participatory planning processes, including ensuring district plans feed into the national planning process.
- Improve understanding and tracking of linkages between national and SADC level policies and frameworks in agriculture and health, and how they translate into service delivery at local level.

Media: While undertaking the role of the watchdog themselves, media outlets can also partner with civil society to amplify findings from social accountability monitoring. The baseline report has identified a number of areas where targeted support to journalists, including a focus on women

journalists would enable them to play an important role in support of social accountability monitoring and advocacy resulting in more informed and empowered communities, an independent and credible media and ultimately policy reform.

In particular, the baseline recommended:

- Capacity building in terms of research and collection of evidence-based data, particularly training to networks of journalists working on specific content areas like HIV and AIDS, SRHR and food security.
- Support for journalists to understand social accountability monitoring processes, analyse legal and policy frameworks and look at these in the context of pro-poor development and participatory processes.
- Build relationships between journalists and other actors in social accountability monitoring processes, in particular with CSOs.
- Train bloggers and social media activists, alongside mainstream media and CSOs, to engage in PRM processes.
- Support for journalists to access various discussion spaces and develop greater links with government departments.
- Development of incentives for investigative reporting, including awards, fellowships and travel grants.