

Social Accountability Monitoring – Experiences and Lessons Learned

Since the adoption of Social Accountability Monitoring (SAM) in all of the Policy Forum's activities, PF continues to build capacity of her members on this area so as to enhance their ability in monitoring public resources. For this reason, PF has partnered with eight members in undertaking the Social Accountability Monitoring at the local level i.e. Local Government Authorities. In all of the eight sites (Kibaha-KNC, Mwanza-MPI, Babati-MACSNET, Kiteto-KCS Forum, Morogoro-UNGO, Mbeya-MIICO, Lindi-TACOSODE and Ulanga-ANSAF, the major lessons learned as a result of the SAM intervention are as follows:

- ***LGAs projects Implementation***

From the experience through the implementations of SAM in LGAs, it has been observed that there is a poor implementations of community projects entrusted under district councils, in all of the sites in which SAM has been conducted, projects are either partially or not implemented at all. The reasons to this among others includes - late disbursement of funds from central level, misuse of project funds, improper procurement procedures and inadequate oversight in monitoring development projects. Were this issues and others to be addressed, LGAs will be able to improve service delivery to the community.

- ***Internal Audit Unit & Internal Audit Function***

This plays as internal control environment which are critical for both financial and performance management as they provide checks and balances for effective transparency and efficient delivery of services (financial mismanagement and fraud), expenditure management and performance monitoring and enhance oversight process. Since the internal auditor is reporting first to District Executive Director through Council Management Team before submitting the report to Full Council the process compromise the internal audit queries and some of the district we have implemented SAM they do not have Internal Audit Committee and

some which has, to some extent it is not independent since it involve even some members who are staff of the LGAs. It has been advised that the internal auditor be employed by CAG or Ministry of Finance and the quarterly audit report should directly go to the Full Council except for monthly audit report. Also the establishment of internal audit committee which must be independent

- ***LGAs documents Accessibility***

In order to have a precise and evidence based public resource monitoring, it is very important for the relevant information/documents to be obtained from the authorities. However the experience has shown that access to information is still a challenge to some of the LGAs which SAM has been implemented and this is due to the lack of political will, citizens not being informed about their rights and also poor planning process. Also it was realized that it is very difficult for an ordinary citizens to access reliable information, regardless of the accessibility, documents are also produced using technical terms or English language which is not familiar to majority citizens. Therefore, the accessibility of relevant information will enable citizens to participate in decision making as well as hold accountable agencies of public service delivery during the implementation and use of resources. And this will only be possible and more practical when ***Freedom of Information bill*** will be in place, therefore its high time now for the CSOs and all development practitioners to advocate for its enactment.

- ***Community Participation in planning and Budgeting***

This lack of information is coupled with the lack of political will and awareness by local governments to promote inclusiveness in planning and monitoring of the implementation. It was suggested that there is a need to raise the government's awareness on this through the importance of full implementation of D by D - including the benefits of participation - so that they take responsibility for creating more participatory governance and monitoring of social delivery services. Local government officials should also know that the priorities of local citizens should be reflected in the

planning process. They should adhere to these priorities and conduct public consultations if there are any changes in the plans. It was noted that participation will be seen as beneficial to the people if they see tangible results of their participation.

- ***Staffing***

Issues of staffing are regarded as one of the major factors which constrain the capability of LGAs to improve service delivery, quality and accessibility. In areas where SAM has been implemented, it was observed that there is critical shortage of staff especially at the dispensaries and health centers for instance in Ileje district and Morogoro rural district. This shortage of staffs in the LGAs is coupled with the current recruiting system (whereby LGAs do not have the mandate of recruiting its own staffs) shortage of qualified personnel, hardworking environment and remoteness of some of the LGAs.

- ***Involving Council officials in monitoring activities.***

When conducting monitoring activities in LGAs, it is very important to involve the officials from the council; this will facilitate the accessibility of the relevant documents to be used for analysis also it helps in clarifying the issues emanated from the preliminary analysis of the documents. This encourages the transparency in the use of public funds and hence enhances accountability in service delivery.

- ***Close follow up and monitoring***

During the implementation of SAM in the district, it is now clear that close follow-ups and monitoring of the findings emanated from the documents as well as site visitation encourages changes, this has been proved in the case of Ileje district whereby accounting officers promised to react on the matters which were presented during the feedback meeting regarding the health service provision in the district. The closely follow-up and visit of the dispensaries by the team encouraged the initial changes. Therefore it is

worth noting that in advocating for changes it is very important to closely monitor the initial changes which in future might result in the systemic changes.

- ***SAM process as an empowering tool***

With this capacity building for local CSOs and their stakeholders changed their perception of their role towards the Government; they now have accepted that it is their role as citizen to hold to account their Government and its agencies in service delivery and use of public resources. SAM is one of the most useful tools when addressing systemic issues.

- ***CSOs & Government collaboration***

Government and CSOs working together is crucial in enhancing Social Accountability Monitoring development at regional and local level in Tanzania. This cooperation is also crucial in monitoring governance and accountability. The CSOs have a strong role to play in the decision-making processes and in relaying the view “from the field” to the institutional actors, who are often not aware of the realities at the grass root level.

- ***Funds disbursement and execution***

Local Government funds are frequently not disbursed as planned and allocated in the Medium Term Expenditure Framework. It was also noted that funds from central government and donors are sometimes not spent as planned due to corruption, incapacity of the authorities to spend and the problem of disbursing funds on the 3rd or 4th quarter of the financial year, which was deemed as too late. This has implication in service delivery since there will be the delay in the completion of the planned activities for instance, construction of dispensaries which in turn denies citizens’ rights in accessing the health services.

- ***LGAs ability to collect their revenues***

It has been observed that LGAs have a very low ability to collect their own revenue as own source of fund, they highly depend from central government grants. In all of the sites which SAM has been conducted the amount in which the councils contribute to the total budget is about 5%. This has implication in service delivery in the sense that it prompts some of the development projects to start being implemented in delay or not implemented at all hence denies the community rights in accessing social services.

- ***Ineffectiveness of oversight bodies on monitoring LGAs Projects***

Since only one committee of Finance, Planning and Administration is mandated to monitor all LGAs projects it has undermined the effectiveness of oversight bodies through its committee. SAM experience advocate that all councilors committee to also monitor through their respective sectors so as to have a close follow-up because only one councilor committee cannot make a close follow up and monitoring all the projects within the course of budget year implementation to the whole district

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