

Can Social Accountability Monitoring help improve school conditions?

Mwanza Visit Notes

Date of field trip: September 30th and October 1st, 2015

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Background

Both Tanzanian primary and secondary schools have seen considerable increases in enrolment in the last decade or so. By 2011, 94% of children aged 7 to 13 years were enrolled in primary schools which is an increase from only 59% in 2000. The net secondary school enrolment has also increased rapidly from 6% in 2011 to over 30%.¹ Despite these achievements, dropout rates continue to increase, completion rates are still low and student performance remain low. For instance in just the year 2010 alone, approximately 68,000 pupils dropped out of primary schools and 66,000 students departed secondary school prematurely. On student performance, low literacy rates are a noticeable as found by the literacy initiative known as Uwezo.² Their 2011 report found that Tanzanian students scored lower than their neighbours on both the English and Kiswahili tests and only one in four children in Standard 3 could read a Standard 2 story in Kiswahili.

These are worrying facts and begs the question whether parents, communities and their civic actors can do much to help improve the quality of education in the schools their children attend. In many different contexts where resources are scarce, it has been noted that participation of citizens and civil society is central for enhancing access to quality education and this is now acknowledged by governments, donors and civil society.³

Policy Forum has for a number of years used Social Accountability Monitoring (SAM), a set of tools which help promote participation and the realisation of basic socio-economic rights and capabilities,⁴ to assist communities to increase responsiveness of service delivery processes through systematic engagement. For the years 2014 and 2015, PF continued to expand the use of SAM tools by partnering with Forum Syd and Magu Civil Societies Network (MACSONET) to carry out SAM in Magu District Council in the education sector.

To this end, SDC who fund the Policy Forum SAM initiatives in Tanzania, joined the implementers in Magu and Illemela Districts of Mwanza region to see the impact and challenges of the intervention. The visit, on September 30th and October 1st, 2015 was also aimed at allowing SDC to understand the work of her partners better. This report is a brief account of the visit and highlights some of the key issues that came across during discussions in Mwanza.

Magu visit

MACSONET, which works on Community Development in Magu and Busega districts, shared their recent SAM analysis gathered after their staff, members, Magu council officials and councillors

¹ Tanzania: Education equity and quality: <http://www.unicef.org/tanzania/education.html>

² Are Our Children Learning? Annual Learning Assessment Report 2012: http://www.uwezo.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/TZ_Uwezo2012ALAReport.pdf

³ Social Accountability in the Education Sector:

http://www.worldbank.org/socialaccountability_sourcebook/PrintVersions/Education%2006.22.07.pdf

⁴ lessons learned in Social Accountability Monitoring: <http://www.policyforum-tz.org/lessons-learned-social-accountability-monitoring>

attended an orientation on the SAM concept organised by Policy Forum. After the training, MACSONET selected the 2013/2014 Education Sector plan and budget for analysis which found that:

1. There was late disbursement of capital funds like that of capitation grants for secondary education (For instance, about 92,081,000/- was not disbursed to secondary education in Magu district);
2. Magu district council depends more on central government for development funds which leads to delays in completing development projects on time (e.g. construction of secondary school laboratories whereby required are 57 and available are 11);
3. A huge number of school dropout cases (in Ng'wamabanza secondary school in Mwamabanza ward the team found that for the year 2009/2010, the school enrolled about 72 students but only 26 completed in the year 2013/2014 and among them 16 were male and 9 were female and about 21);
4. Inadequate teachers' houses like Magu secondary school and pit latrine which are not in a good condition like Ng'wamabanza secondary school.

MACSONET staff and members reported in their presentation that after SAM analysis and holding a feedback meeting with Magu stakeholders, the finance committee agreed to work on the recommendations from their report. On follow up which mostly focused on the secondary schools in Magu, the following was observed:

1. At Ng'wamabanza Secondary School which was found not to have toilets in October 2014, now had newly-built 8-hole pit latrine for boys;
2. The schools still see delays in the capitation grant and even when it arrives, it is insufficient and not the TSh 26,630 per pupil as agreed in the policy (explanation from the schools is that government takes half of it);
3. Most schools in the area have regular water shortages;
4. Shortage of teacher's houses;
5. Shortage of Science teachers
6. Newly-built laboratories were not functioning though equipment will be delivered soon.

Lessons learned:

1. **Relevance of SAM trainings to individuals close the service delivery:** It has been observed that SAM training enables communities to understand that they have rights to demand for explanations and justifications from duty-bearers on the decisions they make on the use of the community's resources.
2. **Access to information:** Communities must have access to timely, useful and reliable information on their surroundings to effect change. The SAM teams that have been able to influence processes because they had the basic tools to collect, analyse and use the evidence. Decision-makers at the local level are likely to resent being held to account on presentation of weak evidence or when faced with partisan activism.
3. **Effective self-organising at local level requires capable individuals:** If community-based organisations are to effectively influence local processes, they need members who not only have a stake in their local development but have the capabilities. Retired officials, recent college graduates who decide to return and work in their areas (one SAM team member we found in Magu was an alumna of one of the secondary schools analysed in the SAM exercise) and local civic actors who have forged links with regional and national actors.
4. **Involvement of council officials:** When involving local authorities in SAM, the process of accessing relevant documents and information for analysis is eased and the relationship

between CSOs and authorities is smoothed through improved understanding of the SAM concept.

5. **School Boards Composition:** During the visit, the process and criteria for the composition of the school boards was not made very clear (apparently the Regional Commissioner nominates from names proposed for him) and it was expressed a number of times that if these boards were functioning well, they would have been doing what the SAM team did in Magu. Moreover, it was noted that if enough parents who have longer-term personal and emotional stakes in the schools (schooling involves numerous generations of the family) were involved in these boards, they would effectively participate in the governance of the schools and be less likely to work on meeting allowance basis (posho).
6. **Priority-setting for Schools:** There were a number of observations made by school staff that risked being inferred by visitors as misplaced priorities. For example, the desire for staff to build a school fence and acquire a music system ahead of obtaining books and science teachers was not understood. There needs to be a clear and inclusive process for setting school priorities in none exists.
7. **Can enhanced School Autonomy help?:** There was information that some schools have employed part-time teachers from their own budgets, filling the teacher gap. It needs to be explored further if school boards, working with parents, can help reduce the teacher gap by hiring directly.
8. **Sustainability:** With the promising social accountability work being undertaken by community organisations comes the question of how sustainable it will be in the long run. Technical support and resources look likely to diminish for such groups as Dar-based organisations continue to face decline in overseas funding. National CSOs in recent years have been expressing concern on this and discussing ways to overcome the challenge, including innovative ways to garner resources. Before this becomes a reality, however, for the foreseeable future many Tanzanian national-level organisations will remain tied to traditional sources of support in order to continue the professional work of enhancing the capacities of local civic groups. This means that outcomes of SAM have to be tangible enough for communities to be enticed and incentivised to learn and implement its tools so as to improve their lives. Showing this link will create the source of sustainability.

Ilemela District Council Visit

The trip also included a Courtesy call to the District Executive Director (DED) which was an interesting reminder of the complexities involved in collaborating with local authorities. Two things came out of the visit:

The role of CSOs is sometimes misunderstood: Often local service delivery improvement in areas such as health and education is seen as the rightful role of CSOs in Tanzania and enhancing capacity of advocacy groups to demand accountability is perceived as exceeding the mandate. Although CSOs were thanked for the improvements noted at the Mwaloni Fish Market intervention,⁵ it was expressed that they could also provide funds for development projects.

⁵ In 2008, CSOs in Mwanza analyzed the documents related to the city's resource allocation and discovered that Fishermen contributed 13% city council's revenue yet there was no budget allocation to improve the water and sanitation infrastructure at the fish market. The following year, an allocation was made in the city budget to rehabilitate infrastructure at the Mwaloni Fish Market.

Sensitivity of advocacy during elections: It was expressed by authorities that the visit to the fish market during this election period would stir partisan commotion and visitors were given advice not to ask questions about accountability when they reached the market, which they heeded so as to continue to gain the trust of the DED.

Other visits

The team also paid visits to PF members in Mwanza at the offices of the Mwanza Policy Initiative (MPI), and PF SAM partner, the Mwaloni Fish Market to learn of the income generation activities there where the SAM 2008 intervention focused and Fishers Union Organisation (FUO).

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