

(Talk notes)

Social Accountability Practitioners Conference, Dar es Salaam, August 2013.

Monitoring Impact and Learning Lessons – Lessons from Actions for Democracy and local Governance (ADLG), Tanzania.

This paper is meant to provide information that shall help in reflecting on how CSOs can institutionalize systematic learning for organizational effectiveness, including best practices. As one of the presenters I am supposed also to highlight the methodologies for monitoring the impact of our intervention work.

Let me also mention that I was given instructions; “No Power point presentation, only speaking notes.” I was particularly asked to:

1. Explain in brief what we do as an Animator and the thematic area we work in. explain what the term “animator” means.
2. Describe, in general terms, the kind of approach that we take in communities.
3. Learning from the citizens we work with: Show best way/method to ensure our practices as an animator are improved after feedback from community members.
4. Give some specific examples on how we get people in a group to determine their strengths as community mobilizes.
5. Show how we know that community members’ ability to engage with village government has been enhanced.
6. Give tips about how to document successes and failures.

I will **try** to be accountable!

Introduction:

Actions for Democracy and local Governance (ADLG) in good partnership with Oxfam, implements Chukua Hatua programme since 2010.

The goal of Chukua Hatua is to **achieve increased accountability and responsiveness of government to its citizens**. The programme aims to achieve this by creating active citizenship; that is citizens who know their rights and responsibilities, are demanding them, and are able to search for and access information.

Location of programme: Tanzania – all districts of Shinyanga Region (Shinyanga Rural and Municipal, Kishapu and Kahama), 2 districts of Geita Region (Bukombe and Mbogwe), 3 districts of Simiyu Region (Maswa, Ifilima and Bariadi), and 1 district of Arusha Region (Ngorongoro).

Approach

“Animation” as our approach is built on notion that Tanzanians shall realize their innate potential for improving their lives by collective actions through involving members of the community. This approach is largely influenced by the readings of Paulo Freire’s “Pedagogy of the oppressed” that consider “conscientization” shall develop through a process of community discussions, reflection and finally they (community members) shall be taking actions.

The practice: Practically, these actions are facilitated by “animators,” these are people who use skills in creating awareness, seek to eradicate fear in their communities, ask question about resource allocation, leadership practices and service delivery processes. These animators help communities to identify and monitor village resources, participate actively in village meetings and identify opportunities and threats as they seek the public to hold local governments to account and enhance democratic governance.

Over the past year, animation has continued to be the pivotal component of Chukua Hatua in all the geographical areas where we are working, supporting linkages between the various other components and between partner organisations. The Chukua Hatua animators have developed an identity of their own, being well known as active citizens, and sometimes as ‘troublemakers’, both within and outside the programme, largely as a result of their growing activism and confidence.

Several further rounds of animation training have occurred, including orientation sessions for faith leaders and teachers, which have contributed significantly to their solidarity and cooperation. We are increasingly seeing animators moving from querying and questioning to following up on happenings in their villages and, a more recent phenomena, calling their leaders rather than waiting for their leaders to come when they need, communities are directly and more frequently demanding for village executives and councilors to attend village meetings.

Many communities have taken the necessary steps to ensure that village meetings are happening more frequently and that income and expenditure reports are being submitted to the village during those meetings. From observations made during the last two rounds of mentoring sessions, around 80% of animators visited have been able to push for regular village meetings. This step has not gone without resistance from village leaders who often stand to lose from such increased transparency.

Chukua Hatua is also seeing a trend in terms of communities not only being more reactive to mismanagement but actually taking steps to lay better foundations for accountability. For example, community members from Shenda village ousted their village chairperson after an income and expenditure report showed that there had been mismanagement of funds. Instead of moving straight ahead with putting into place a new chairperson, the villagers are now looking for the relevant information at the district level on the correct rules and procedures for electing a new chairperson and are discussing within groups what are the main characteristics and attributes that they would like to see in a new leader.

The third major trend has been growing activism in Shinyanga, Simiyu and Geita around mining issues. The number of animators and communities tackling mining-related concerns has multiplied over the past year in all the 7 districts and has led to villages even in areas where we have no animators approaching us for support.

Mentoring and coaching

Mentoring forms big part in strengthening the animation approach. We organize regular and ad-hock visits. Normally we meet animators with their respective community group members who are usually not more than 30 and not less than 15. We discuss about what they are doing, challenges, successes and help them to cast away fear. This activity helps the programme in many ways including reducing failures and getting success stories! ADLG finds *story telling* as one of the interesting sessions within Chukua Hatua. *Story telling* involves memory books, which every animator has one; the memory book helps to capture stories for the Chukua Hatua newsletter.

Mentoring and coaching sessions have been central in ensuring that animators are not working in isolation but are creating and tapping into the right support networks in order to build up the necessary numbers to really pressure for change. Mentoring sessions currently consist of farmer group members, teachers and faith leaders and oftentimes attract the attention of other community members who then join in. For those communities and groups that have developed enough confidence and momentum, local government leaders such as village chairpersons and councillors are also included where possible and where that would not close down the citizen space for discussions and planning. These joint mentoring sessions have shown signs of being able to create support groups that continue beyond the 'official' mentoring session; these groups continue to meet, discuss and plan actions long after the mentoring session. In several instances, in villages where citizens are working on **specific and complex issues**, groups have become extremely active and are actively seeking further information, from government.

A new strategy that we have just recently started pursuing is the use of strong animators for coaching and mentoring other animators. Previously this was done in a relatively ad-hoc manner, usually in mentoring sessions or otherwise at the initiative of proactive animators who visited other animators to support them. We saw during the second year of Chukua Hatua that animators were creating their own networks and communicating directly with each other. Some animators who were working on similar issues were visiting each other and animators who had had successes on certain cases were called by other animators for support. This year, we have started building on that movement by supporting those animators who have already taken a leading role in their respective districts to become coaches.

Documenting success and failures; Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Learning continues to be central to Chukua Hatua and continues to be a regular component of all activities within the programme. On-going monitoring continues using the **Outcome Mapping journals**, which feeds into the programme's Outcome Mapping report.

“Outcome Mapping is an innovative approach to project and programme planning, monitoring and evaluation with a strong focus on participatory learning. The major innovation is the emphasis on the behaviour change of key actors with whom the programme has an influence, rather than focussing on changes in state that may or may not be attributed to the programme.”

To supplement, sometimes ad-hoc data coming out of the outcome mapping journals, the programme relies more on supplementary information from field visit reports, partner reports, and telephone conversations with animators. The latest Outcome Mapping report has shown that although we are getting adequate information from some boundary partners, e.g. communities and politicians, there are other boundary partners that we have virtually no data on, e.g. civil servants. With this in mind, we are planning on re-looking at our boundary partners and focusing on those who we are best engaging and are most motivated to be agents of the change that we are aiming at.

Chukua Hatua has also just completed a project effectiveness review. The review used a combined approach of Process Tracing and Outcome Harvesting to assess the extent to which: a) the changes that the Chukua Hatua programme was seeking in Tanzania have taken place; and b) whether there is evidence that the programme contributed to these changes.

Lastly, on a 6-monthly basis, Chukua Hatua organizes Learning Events bringing together animators, staff, partners and other stakeholders.

Learning, as most of you are aware, is a process and an endless process, let's monitor and learn towards improving social accountability monitoring work!

Thanks!

Big part of the information is extracted from Chukua Hatua report (April 2012 – March 2013) submitted to KPMG by Oxfam.