

CEADZ

Fact Sheet

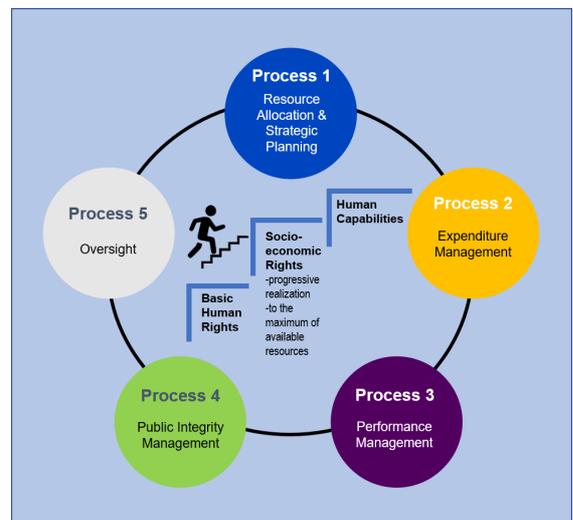
Social Accountability Monitoring

Introduction

The Civic Engagement for Accountability and Democracy in Zimbabwe (CEADZ) is a four-year program, currently in its last 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. In achieving this, the PSAM model uses five key processes that are central to public resource management.

This factsheet summarizes CEADZ results and lessons achieved during the three years of program implementation. The document presents major behavioral, attitudinal, and perceptual changes among boundary partners (stakeholders).



What is 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 citizenship. 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.



Lessons from CEADZ SA

The practice of Social Accountability under the CEADZ program reveals several critical lessons for citizen participation in local governance reforms.

a) Access to information, coordination and awareness are the basic building blocks for Social Accountability:

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.

- 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.
- If Civil society accountability action is not coordinated and supported by good access to independent reliable sources of information, the bargaining power of citizen collective action is weakened thus emphasizing the need for platforms and spaces where citizens access credible information for effective SAM.



- 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

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 interventions 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.

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 agree. 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,

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



- 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.

which can lead to less than desirable results. This brings prominence to interlocutors, incentives, and the importance of interlocution in SAM.

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.

- 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, most 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.

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 monitor and track the delivery of services by the service providers at both national and local government levels.

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.

- Highlighting poor resource management is necessary but not sufficient to equate to Social Accountability.
- 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.

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. Through sustained technical assistance and coaching, media coverage by CEADZ partners, which while extensive and voluminous may not have necessarily provided citizens with the contextual knowledge they need to effectively hold duty bearers to account for poor service delivery, has steadily improved with better reporting of social accountability issues and more highlighting of systemic issues impeding accountability. Previously, because of the formulaic reporting style, corruption and maladministration were further normalized.

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.



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.

Significant Outcomes from CEADZ

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 citizen's perceptions about municipal services were supported by factual data collected by them, they faced the authorities with more conviction and ownership.
- Citizen's arguments to improve service delivery became much sharper and their capacities to negotiate and dialogue with elected representatives and officials also enhanced considerably.

- As municipalities gradually started to adopt these tools, they became more capable of responding to the needs of their citizens.

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.

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 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.
- municipalities gradually started to adopt these tools, they became more capable of responding to the needs of their citizens.



- 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.

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.

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

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.

