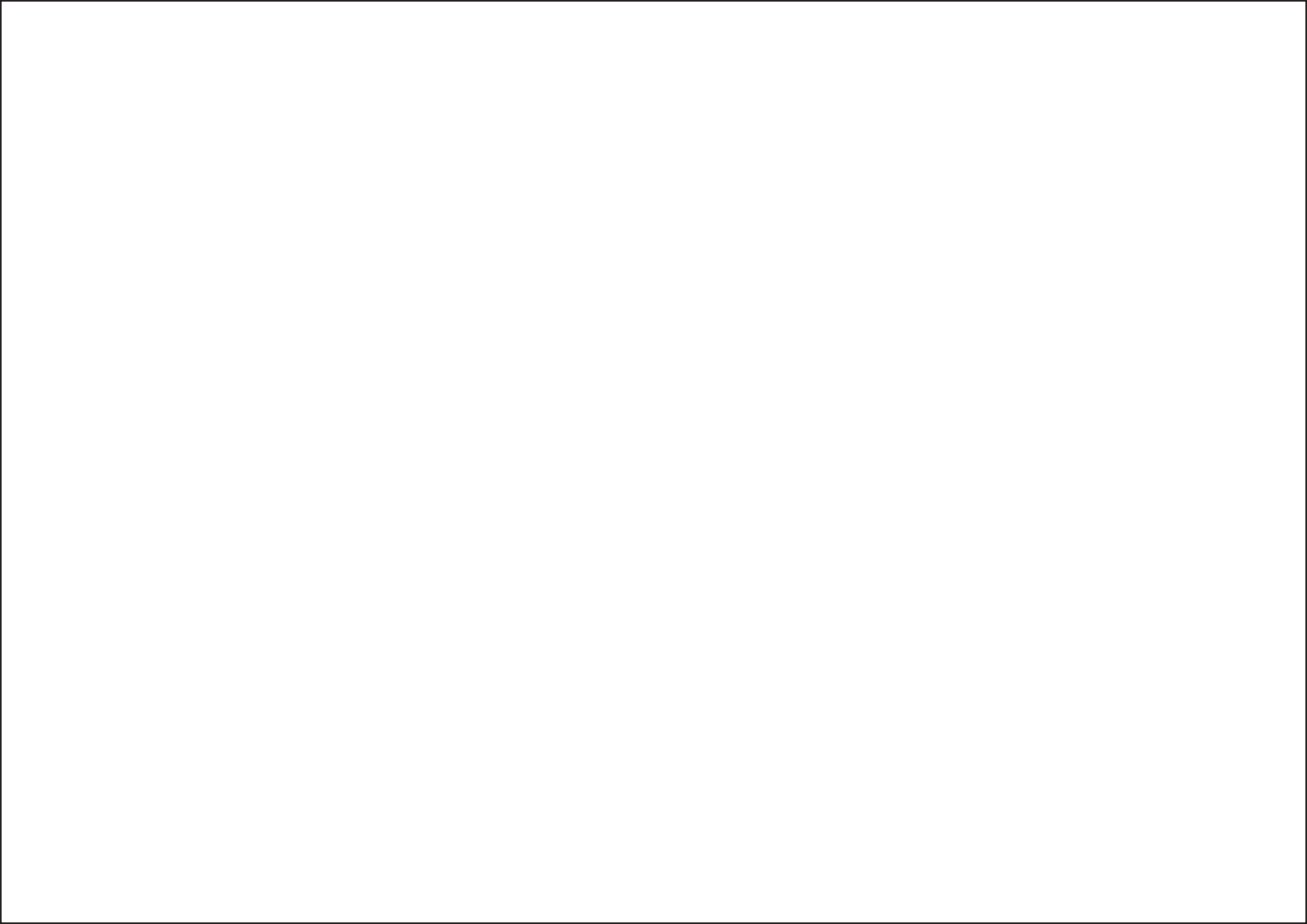


ISER Photo Essay

No. 5 : January 2017

We want to participate





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The Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) is implementing a research – based project: Social Accountability and Community Participation: Improving Local Government Service Delivery in Uganda. The research is exploring the various actions and mechanisms citizens can use to hold their leaders accountable on service delivery. The project aims to generate concrete solutions for greater participation and public accountability at the local government level. This project is being implemented in the six districts of Bushenyi, Kayunga, Kyenjonjo, Kumi, Iganga and Mbale.

This photo essay was generated from the research activities conducted between October 2015 to December 2016 in the above-mentioned districts. Participants were engaged on what mechanisms they use to engage with local leaders about service delivery, what feedback mechanisms are in place, how they participate in planning for their areas, factors that foster effective participation, and challenges to participation.

It was found that the mechanisms commonly used for citizen participation and enabling access to information at the local government level include both formal and informal social accountability mechanisms. The informal mechanisms include notice boards, radio talk shows, mega radio (mobile public address system), local council meetings, community scorecards and community dialogues (Barazas). Some Barazas are run by NGOs, while others are formally managed by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) to create accountability for Government programmes. Examples of formal mechanisms include Water User Committees (WUCs), School Management Committees (SMCs) and Health Unit Management Committees (HUMCs).

Findings so far indicate that both citizens and leaders acknowledge the need for participation and that indeed people would want to be involved in planning and service delivery processes for their communities. However there are limitations to participation and these vary by district. Some participants cited lack of information from the leaders about projects. Others noted that participation comes at a cost especially where they have to move long distances for example to attend a Baraza. Others mentioned that most of the time information displayed on the notice boards is too technical for them to understand. Language was also mentioned as a barrier to participation. Some participants said their views are not considered.

Basing on the community engagement during the research process, citizens are willing to participate but the mechanisms that exist have various weaknesses, which hinder their participation. This photo essay shows different groups of people sharing their views about social accountability and participation. The research findings will form a basis for advocacy to improve citizen participation in local government service delivery processes. It will also serve as a wake up call for many citizens to exercise their legal right to participation.

With support from





The School Management Committee (SMC) of Osopotoit Primary School in Mukonogoro Sub County in Kumi District discussing citizens participation in service delivery. “We held meetings with parents to discuss the absence of water in this school and forwarded this issue to the Sub County and District authorities but we have not recieved any feedback for about two years now.” Member of School Management Committee



A Focus Group Discussion with a women's group in Namalemba Sub-County Iganga District participating in the research on citizens participation in service delivery. They said poor information flow affects their participation in government programmes and that many of them are sidelined and not mobilized. Consequently they are seen as not being interested in participation.



Lack of feedback from the authorities affects the operations of community social accountability structures.

“We have raised our voices on the broken down bore holes but the leaders at the district have not responded.” Comment from a member of the Buzansa Water User Committee in Butiiti Sub County in Kyenjojo District during a Focus Group Discussion.



••••• The Female Youth Councilor of Kyenjojo District stressing a point during the ISER research validation workshop. The youth are rarely involved in the initial stages of planning for the projects that affect them; yet the planners always blame the youth for not participating in government programmes.



(L-R) The Iganga District Community Development Officer Mr. Batuuka Samuel, Resident District Commissioner Ms. Muhindo Pulkeria and ISER Social Accountability programme Coordinator Mr. Ebunyu Charles during a radio talk show on RFM in Iganga District. A caller expressed disappointment that during Barazas ordinary citizens are not allowed to ask questions. That instead the Baraza is dominated by politicians who use most of the time to talk about their own issues.



ISER Social Accountability programme Coordinator Mr. Ebunyu Charles addressing Iganga Northern Division leaders during a dialogue on community participation in government programmes. It was found that Government delays in responding to community needs greatly affects their participation in its programming.



“...we carry out sensitization and trainings for the Village Health Teams (VHTs) who in turn pass on the message to the communities on general health issues ...” This is how the Atutur Hospital Members of the Board in Kumi District interact with the communities on health service delivery.



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The Water User Committee (WUC) of Acaapa village in Mukongoro Sub County Kumi District alleged that there is discrimination in involving people to participate. “If you are a nobody in the community, you cannot be called to participate in the planning processes.”



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A discussion with the youth group in Butunduzi Sub County in Kyenjojo District. “... we do not benefit from the programs designed for us because of the bureaucracies involved in getting those programs...” a youth lamented.



The Health Unit Management Committee (HUMC) of Namunumya Health Centre II in Namalemba Sub County in Iganga District. Members of the HUMCs noted that citizens are not satisfied with the service delivery at this health centre because of the high number of patients seeking services. The health centre is located at the border of Iganga and Bugiri districts. The high number of patients has affected the quality of services being offered.



Kyeizooba Sub County sector heads in Bushenyi District discussing initiatives that the government has undertaken to empower the citizens to be able participate in local government service delivery processes. Initiatives include capacity building for Water User Committees (WUCs) on engaging communities about protecting water sources and engaging WUCs in case of challenges.



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Youth FGD in Busiu Town Council in Mbale District during which the youth lamented that many leaders including the President think that the youth only like receiving free things. “This is not the case. We are not consulted”, one member added.



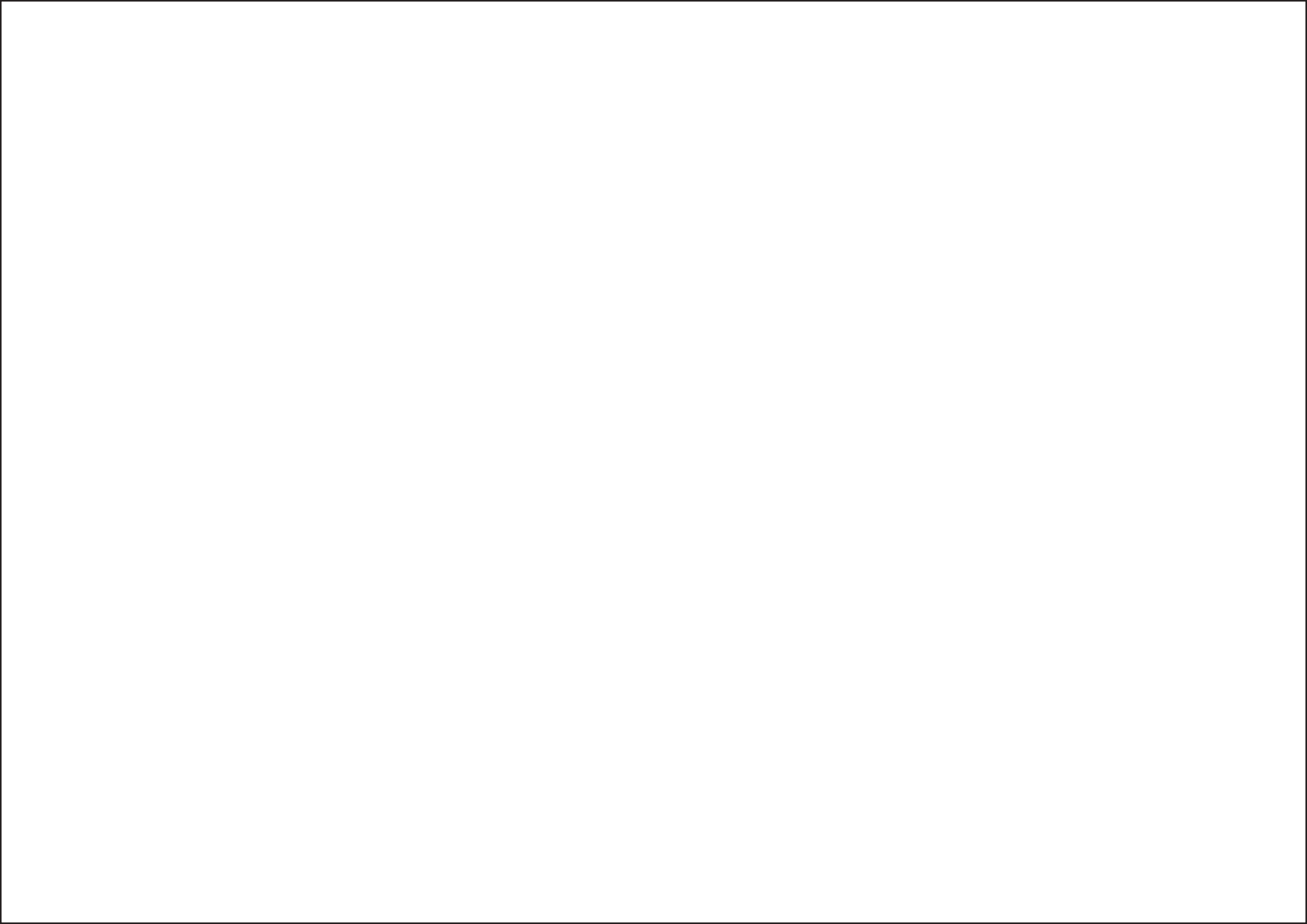
“Leaders have not engaged citizens on service delivery because of high expectation from the citizens, fear to express failures and facing criticisms from citizens”. This was noted during the community dialogue on social accountability and community participation held at Busaana Sub County in Kayunga District.



A participant raising health related issues during a health Baraza at Kangulumira Sub County in Kayunga District on how to improve health service delivery in the area. Citizens raised issues in the presence of the duty bearers and answers were provided to some queries.

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About the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights - Uganda

ISER is a registered national Non - Governmental Organisation (NGO) in Uganda founded in February 2012 to ensure full recognition , accountability and realization of social and economic rights primarily in Uganda but also within the East African region.



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