

# Economic & Social Rights Advocacy (ESRA) Brief

Dec 2016 - Issue 7

**Social  
accountability  
as a tool for  
realization of  
economic and  
social rights**



**ISER**  
Facilitating Social Justice

INITIATIVE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS



# Acknowledgements

The Economic and Social Rights Advocacy (ESRA) Brief is a bi-annual publication of the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) whose goal is to create awareness, encourage and stimulate national debate around social economic rights as well as act as a knowledge exchange platform for stakeholders and the broader Ugandan populace.

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The ESRA Brief is published with support from



# Contents

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1. Introduction: Social accountability as a tool for realization of economic and social rights. Page I
2. Social accountability and participation of poor and marginalized communities in local government processes in Uganda. Pages 2 - 3
3. Social accountability as a tool for poverty alleviation, Dr. Nyende Juma - Researcher. Pages 4 - 6
4. Implementation and efficiency of *Barazas* as a social accountability mechanism: Q&A with Commissioner Monitoring & Evaluation, Office of the Prime Minister. Pages 7 - 11
5. The functioning and effectiveness of School Management Committees (SMCs), Moses Maena Musingo, Senior Education Officer - Ministry of Education, Science, Technology & Sports. Pages 12 - 14
6. The need to strengthen Health Unit Management Committees (HUMCs) to improve health service delivery, Aliyi Walibwa, Senior Planner - Ministry of Health. Pages 15 - 17
7. The role of Water User Committees (WUCs) in the rural water supply service delivery model. Page 18
8. Functionality of Water User Committees (WUCs): A case study of Kayunga District, Immaculate Galimuka - Kayunga District Information Officer. Pages 19 - 21
9. A critique of social accountability mechanisms at local government level: Q&A with Hon. Salaamu Musumba. Pages 22 - 26
10. Citizen participation in local government service delivery, Lilian Nakamatte - Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Luuka District. Pages 27 - 28
11. ISER's experience of implementing health *Barazas* in Kayunga District, Allana Kembabazi and Margaret Nabasirye - Right to Health Program - ISER. Pages 29 - 32
12. AGHA's experience of implementing social accountability in health, Dennis Odwee - AGHA Executive Director. Pages 33 - 36
13. Youth voices and participation through youth parliaments in Lira district, Morris Chris Ongom, Executive Director - GLOFORD Uganda. Pages 37 - 39
14. Participatory budgeting impact on efficient and effective service delivery, Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG). Pages 40 - 43
15. Access to information to improve social accountability, Charity Komujurizi, Programme Officer - Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC). Pages 44 - 45
16. The importance of bottom - up processes in social accountability: The case of *Ekimeeza*, Moses Talemwa - Journalist. Pages 46 - 48

# Introduction: Social accountability as a tool for realization of economic and social rights

**S**ocial Accountability can be defined as citizens' capacity to hold the state and service providers to account in order to make them more responsive to the needs of citizens and beneficiaries. Examples of social accountability mechanisms in Uganda include informal mechanisms, for example citizen scorecards, public media campaigns/debates, performance agreements for top district officers, client charters and community meetings on accountability ("Barazas") and the enforcement of commitments emanating therefrom; as well as mechanisms embedded in legal or policy instruments, for example School Management Committees (SMCs), Water User Committees (WUCs) and Health Unit Management Committees (HUMCs) and the like. Participation in public processes is entrenched as a legal right in Uganda's legal framework. Article 38 of the Constitution states that every Ugandan has the right to participate in the affairs of government and to influence government policy. Article 41 guarantees the right of access to information, which is a key prerequisite for participation. Additionally, the Local Government Act provides for democratic participation in, and control of, decision-making by the people.

Since frontline service delivery happens at the local government level, in this edition of the ESRA brief we examine the various mechanisms through which citizens can demand accountability from duty bearers and service providers at the local government level in the areas of health, education and water.

ISER kicks off the discussion with insights into a research based project on *Social Accountability and citizen Participation in Local Government Processes in Uganda*, which among other things advances the argument that by strengthening local governance institutions on the one hand while increasing participation and citizen engagement on the other, countries such as Uganda can more effectively tackle poverty. This is complimented by an article on social accountability as a tool for poverty alleviation. Different government departments discuss the various social accountability mechanisms available at local government level. Specifically the Commissioner of Monitoring and Evaluation in the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) discusses – in a Question and Answer (Q&A) format – the effectiveness of state *Barazas* as a social accountability mechanism, a senior education officer from the Ministry of Education and a senior planner from the Ministry of Health discuss the functionality and effectiveness of SMCs and HUMCs respectively. The Kayunga District Information Officer provides a case study about the functionality of WUCs. Hon. Salaamu Musumba provides a critique of various mechanisms while the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of Luuka district speaks about the impediments to citizen participation.

Civil Society Organisations discuss experiences of implementing social accountability mechanisms. ISER narrates experience implementing quarterly health *Barazas* in Kayunga district and analyses how this has impacted on service delivery in the health sector; the Action Group for Health, Human Rights and HIV/ AIDs (AGHA) shares its experience of implementing a social accountability project focusing on community empowerment in Lyantonde and Pallisa districts aimed at enhancing these communities' ability to claim their health rights. In Lira district, GLOFORD facilitates youth participation in local government service delivery by establishing and convening youth parliaments, which have contributed tremendously to improvements in, for example sexual reproductive health access and service provision. The Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) shares its experiences of engaging in participatory budgeting and discusses the impact of this intervention on service delivery; the Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC) makes the case of access to information as an enabler for participation. And last but not least, a journalist discusses the importance of bottom-up processes in social accountability using the example of *Ekimeeza* (public media debates).



# Social accountability and participation of poor and marginalized communities in local government processes in Uganda

With the funding support of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) is implementing a research-based project on Social Accountability and Participation of Poor and Marginalized Communities in Local Government Processes in the six Ugandan districts of Kayunga, Iganga, Mbale, Kumi, Bushenyi and Kyenjojo.

ISER's point of departure is the assumption that strengthening local governance institutions, and increasing citizen participation and engagement in social delivery process serve as key strategies to tackle poverty in countries such as Uganda. This strategy seeks to bring government closer to citizens, in order that public officials can be more responsive to citizen's demands on the one hand and accountable for the decisions and actions taken in order to realize these demands on the other. The anticipated result of such an approach is better-designed and targeted interventions across a range of basic services.

The main set of interventions in this regard, namely increased 'citizen voice' and improved public accountability, have been grouped together under the category of 'social accountability', which refers to a broad range of actions and mechanisms citizens and communities can use to hold public officials accountable – across a range of arenas including local service-delivery to national policy processes. Examples of Ugandan social accountability measures include citizen scorecards, public media campaigns, district officers' performance agreements, client charters and community accountability meetings ("Barazas"). While the range of available social accountability actions is extensive, they have generated mixed results. Criticism of social accountability measures in Uganda includes that they are often undertaken in an uncoordinated manner, and are perceived as 'going through the motions' of participation, that is, they spur participation by using technical tools, which may be prone to political capture, and fail to confront deeper political obstacles.

This project seeks to interrogate, through a legal lens, the use of social accountability mechanisms in Uganda. This project posits that social accountability mechanisms have fallen short of their stated accountability goals precisely because these mechanisms currently lack sufficient institutionalization and links to other formal accountability mechanisms. Establishing such links in a more effective manner could help bolster the responsiveness of formal accountability mechanisms. Further, many of the goals targeted by social accountability mechanisms already exist as legal rights, for instance, the Ugandan Constitution guarantees citizen participation in public affairs. The assumption guiding the research, in other words, is that the citizen voices and engagement targeted by social accountability efforts are better viewed in terms of legal rights relating to and ensuring public participation in political processes.

The project is testing these assumptions through comparative case studies examining three types of participation and social accountability interventions at the local government level: (1) programmes funded by international development donors; (2) government supported initiatives, specifically the *Barazas* or community accountability meetings; and (3) institutionalized mechanisms established under law, specifically the Water User Associations allowed under the Water Act, the Health Unit Management Committees and School Management Committees. The research employs standard social science methods (structured interviews, small surveys, focus-group discussions, observation), complemented with legal and policy analysis.

Preliminary findings from the research indicate that the legal framework in Uganda makes sufficient provision for citizen participation, which should ideally be implemented through various social accountability mechanisms. However, this provision is seriously undermined by the fact that communities do not fully understand the concept of social accountability, neither are they fully conversant with the various mechanisms available for social accountability – those formally embedded in the law, and more informal approaches. This lack

of awareness has serious implications: firstly, citizens are not empowered to demand accountability, with the result that only a handful of the citizens participate in local government planning processes; secondly, this fosters an environment in which leaders can easily become complacent, making little effort to provide citizens with any kind of feedback or general accounting for decisions and actions taken; thirdly, it presumes the discretion of political leadership – as opposed to imposing a duty upon them – to intentionally consult, engage and involve poor and marginalized citizens in service delivery processes. This situation is exacerbated by a lack of structured and legally embedded tracking and monitoring mechanisms to regulate and ensure accountability for public service delivery.



**Bushenyi District officials participate in the ISER social accountability research validation workshop in June 2016**

Through this research, the project aims to generate concrete solutions for greater participation and public accountability at the local government level as well as interrogate assumptions underlying established approaches to participation and social accountability.

# Social accountability as a tool for poverty alleviation



**Dr. Juma Nyende - Social accountability researcher**

While 'social accountability' is a concept that features increasingly in contemporary development literature, its definition remains contested. However, there is generally consensus among state and non-state actors that the aims of social accountability constitute one of the key cornerstones of good governance and decentralized public administration. Consequently, there has been significant momentum to promote and advocate for social accountability in light of the recognition that it is an effective mechanism to address persistent social and developmental challenges, such as poverty alleviation.

Despite the lack of agreement on the definition of social accountability, a common element reflected within its various postulations is the bottom-up orientation of social accountability mechanisms, and their emphasis on seeking to promote and ensure the participation of non-state actors in decision-making, implementation, oversight and accountability processes pertaining to public service delivery. This last point is the reason the author posits that poverty alleviation requires the strategic use of varying citizen participation methods in public service delivery – right from the design and inception of an initiative and accompaniment to its conclusion.

Social accountability is critical for several reasons: firstly, it enhances the transparency of the process of implementation with respect to the public service in question; secondly, it allows for concerns to be flagged and brought to the attention of public functionaries who are mandated to address such issues; and thirdly, where properly implemented, these two previously-mentioned factors facilitate public service delivery that is far more productive, efficient and cost-effective than would otherwise be the case in the absence of a social accountability framework. Social accountability mechanisms can therefore be used to cumulatively improve the livelihoods of individuals, communities and ultimately nation-states.



An important question to consider then, is whether social accountability and the bottom-up engagement of non-state actors that it seeks to facilitate can effectively serve to catalyse improvements in respect of people's livelihoods, in this way serving as a mechanism for poverty alleviation? While there are various approaches that can be taken to respond to this question, it would be beneficial to interrogate related questions before doing so; these questions, which provide insight into the relationship between social accountability and poverty alleviation are: (i) what are the key alleviation strategies for poverty, and; (ii) what positive contribution, if any, does the involvement of non-state actors – including rights holders – make to poverty alleviation efforts? With respect to the first of these questions: the root causes of poverty are numerous and variable among individuals, communities and countries; however, a common correlative of poverty is a deficit of knowledge or information about social entitlements and/or a lack of awareness about opportunities and entry points to assert and claim these entitlements – including forums and modus operandi for citizens to engage public officials and advocate for appropriate state responses to enhance development capabilities.

With respect to the second question: as noted above, the involvement of citizens in public service delivery processes is important in the first instance because this is one way to ensure that services are in fact responsive to identified needs. Secondly, and as above mentioned, citizen participation has the potential to enhance transparency, accountability, efficiency and cost-effectiveness of public service delivery, which has positive implications for any development intervention undertaken and in the longer term for broader poverty - alleviation efforts. Therefore, while the causes of poverty are numerous, what the above highlights is that knowledge, engagement and access to opportunities are necessary and essential preconditions of any poverty - elimination strategy; moreover, coordinating the respective roles, responsibilities and actions of both right holders and duty bearers positively impacts this process of facilitating access to information, engagement and access to opportunities. Such synergy can be achieved through measures such as for example, elections, community forums/platforms and co-management or co-governance mechanisms among others.

Since social accountability mechanisms are fundamentally premised on participatory processes, it is equally important to note that community participation serves additionally to among other things: (i) provide an avenue through which citizens' concerns can be resolved in a co-creative manner thereby, giving expression to the correlative responsibility that attaches to citizen's rights; (ii) it also contributes towards the cultivation of civic pride as well as social inclusiveness - and - cohesion; (iii) it further addresses the challenges inherent in modern democracies, such as for example the sense of political alienation and disaffection among citizens, and; (iv) it ensures the prioritization of the delivery of services that may not feature high on political elite's priority lists.

It should be noted, however, that social accountability and the tenet of community participation on which it is premised, does have potential drawbacks. These include inter alia, slowing down decision-making processes; a failure to add value to decisions in some instances; serving as conduits for individual interests, especially those of the elite where broad and diverse representation is not pursued; an over - emphasis on short term remedial action in some cases; and undermining the effective function of experts and institutions in cases where citizens hijack the processes seeking to make a political statement rather than accomplish tangible social gains. The citizens supposed to benefit from social accountability are sometimes the ones to undermine their very own processes: for example, at times community members fail to attend meetings or make meaningful contributions to the platforms intended to facilitate their participation in public-decision making mechanisms. There are many possible reasons for this: time constraints, disinterest, fatigue, and disappointment arising from not realizing any tangible benefits from the participatory processes are often causes expressed by community members.

Similarly, local elections, which are meant to yield selfless leaders are sometimes treated more as an end in and of themselves rather than a means to support the attainment of accountability, transparency and improved people's livelihoods. Voters sometimes think that their role ends with voting for representatives who then become solely responsible for securing community interests. Within such a paradigm it is hardly

unusual to encounter leaders who are failing in their expected roles for reasons ranging from incompetence, negligence to patent selfish-motive and corruption that at times involves connivance with the very people they are meant to monitor.

Therefore, much as social accountability can be used to attain or enhance varying development goals, it is also susceptible to abuse not only by duty bearers but also by right holders. Indeed there is a difference between the real power needed to effect the socio-economic outcome of social accountability mechanisms and the common practice of engaging in them simply as a checklist-ticking exercise.

As this article has sought to demonstrate, social accountability can no doubt act as a strong tool for poverty alleviation interventions. This is because the application of social accountability mechanisms generate key information; ensure compliance with procedures and respond to citizen sentiments in a manner instrumental to cultivating and harnessing capabilities that can translate into development and wealth-generating potential. However, in order for this to occur, there needs to be a synergized effort between right holders and duty bearers, all of whom have a distinctive role to play in respect of the poverty alleviation process.

# Implementation and efficiency of *Barazas*<sup>1</sup> as a social accountability mechanism



**Q&A with Dr. Albert Byamugisha, Commissioner for Monitoring and Evaluation in the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) of the Republic of Uganda**

**Question:** Seven years have elapsed since the introduction of *Barazas*: do you think Government has achieved the stated objectives of this mechanism?

**Response:** Government has certainly achieved a considerable number of *Barazas*' intended objectives, and it has additionally learned important lessons along the way. However, we are still awaiting the report of an ongoing evaluation of this mechanism, which will enable us to more accurately assess both the nature and magnitude of the impact of the programme of community empowerment implemented in regards to the Economic and Social Rights (ESRs) of the *Wananchi*<sup>2</sup>.

**Question:** How effective is the *Baraza* as a social accountability mechanism?

**Response:** *Barazas* have resulted in local communities taking increased ownership of government programmes. They have also proven to be a very effective means of educating and sensitizing citizens on important matters which affect their welfare; and they are highly empowering in terms of availing otherwise inaccessible information to communities. The cross-cutting issues raised by citizens during *Barazas* have galvanised prompt government responsiveness to communities' development demands. In addition, *Barazas* serve as monitoring mechanisms which are incorporated into government's performance reporting cycles, thereby enhancing

<sup>1</sup> Barazas are a Presidential initiative implemented by the Government of Uganda in Local Governments as performance monitoring programmes for citizens to participate in the development cycle through the monitoring the use of public resources in the delivery of services at the Local Government level.

<sup>2</sup> Swahili for citizens

the State's strategic and evidence-based decision-making processes. The *Baraza* programme thus serves as a platform for citizens' bold participation in the development cycle, in particular with respect to monitoring the use of public resources.

**Question: Please speak to some successes of *Barazas***

**Response:** As a result of *Barazas*, government has responded to citizens' general outcry and demand for standardised implementation guidelines for national programmes and policies. It has done this by reviewing, and where necessary revising policy and programme implementation modalities in order to enhance their efficiency and efficacy. One such example is the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) programme whose implementation modality was recently modified. Another example is the introduction of Operation Wealth Creation (OWC) which is intended to address delays and resolve irregularities relating to the distribution of agriculture inputs to beneficiary communities.

Another positive consequence of the implementation of the *Baraza* programme at the local government level has been the establishment or improvement of a significant number of community access roads and health facilities across the country. The 2016-2021 government manifesto strategy of upgrading Health Center IIIs to Health Center IVs is a direct response to the demands for improved healthcare service delivery made during *Barazas*.

Similarly, the dismissal or transfer of officials in ministries, departments and other government agencies signify another success of the *Baraza* process especially since the positive and negative activities of many of these state officials were brought to light by citizens' reporting during the *Baraza* process. This has greatly contributed towards government's efforts to eradicate corruption and reward exemplary public service which is leading to the realization of good service delivery to citizens.

**Question: What is the current coverage of the *Barazas* in terms of district, and lower local governments; and how often do you hold the *Barazas*?**

**Response:** *Barazas* have been conducted at least thrice in all districts in the country that were recognised as of 30th June 2016 (this includes Kampala Capital City Authority). 800 lower local governments have also convened a *Baraza* forum. *Barazas* are held on a quarterly basis, every financial year.

**Question: Uganda's legal framework enshrines the right of citizens to participate in the democratic process: Article 38 of Uganda's Constitution provides that every Ugandan has the right to participate in the affairs of government and to influence government policy. What measures does the Office of the Prime Minister currently have in place to ensure the equal participation of women, men and vulnerable groups in the *Barazas*?**

**Response:** It is important to note that the average attendance recorded at each *Baraza* has been 700 people constituted of men, women, youth, disabled persons and other vulnerable groups; all of whom are encouraged by the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) and political leaders to express their views openly and without any fear. I should note, however, that due to limited financial resources, the scope of both the performance review and accountability presentations restrict their focus to the following poverty eradication frontline sectors: education, health, agriculture, roads and water/sanitation. The OPM intends to mobilise resources and support to augment the scope to cover salient issues from sectors including (but not restricted to) gender, land, security, JLOS<sup>3</sup>. This will enable the vulnerable groups, including women, children and the disabled to participate in the *Baraza* process with confidence and assurance that their pleas will reach government.



**Question:** The focus of *Barazas* is quite general in nature, for example, a single *Baraza* may tackle all areas of service delivery in one afternoon. Have you considered implementing sector-specific *Barazas* e.g. health, education, water?

**Response:** In 2013/2014, OPM began a process of decentralising the *Baraza* programme in order to enable local governments to assume primary responsibility for implementation of *Baraza* activities with the OPM conducting oversight, routine follow-up and implementation monitoring.

The decentralisation process is still being piloted. When it commenced, RDCs were assigned 30% of the total *Baraza* budget for each *Baraza*. These funds are intended for publicity and mobilisation activities in addition to the logistics for the *Baraza* event itself. In 2016/2017, this amount was increased to 45% of the total budget, again to cover all associated costs for a single *Baraza*, including among others publicity, mobilisation and general logistical costs such as venue hire, catering, public address systems etc. We imagine that when *Barazas* are fully decentralised, local governments shall have the opportunity to increase the frequency and reach of these fora so that they reach parish level and are implemented on a sector-by-sector basis.

**Question:** Based on your experience of implementing *Barazas* to date, what changes would you want to see?

**Response:** I believe government should recognise and reward, through formal acknowledgements or awards of some kind, those civil servants whose accountability reports on the use of government resources is positively endorsed by local communities. I believe positive incentives are a good counter-balance to negative sanctions for poor service delivery and accountability as this ensures that service providers are not merely motivated to comply, but they are encouraged to go above and beyond their mandates. This also serves as a goodwill gesture (as opposed to witch hunt) to those civil servants for whom community-based accountability fora constitute a component of their M&E kit intended to ensure good governance and the empowerment of local communities with relevant information.

**Question:** What feedback mechanisms exist to ensure that issues raised during the *Barazas* are resolved?

**Response:** The RDC formulates a report which highlights the issues raised; sets out planned actions with clear implementation timelines and articulates recommendations where appropriate. This report is submitted to the OPM and the Office of the President. The OPM combines the reports of the various *Barazas* into a single consolidated master report that contains a matrix delineating the policy issues raised that directly affect developmental targets (in terms of rates of implementation and overall progress within the respective local governments). The issues in the matrix that require central government's attention are submitted to the relevant ministries, departments and agencies for action; while those that require the attention of the local governments are dispatched to the various local governments for the attention of local leadership. OPM then conducts routine follow-up activities at the sectoral, Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and local government levels to ascertain the extent of implementation of recommendations emanating from *Barazas*. The follow up is predominantly conducted on a quarterly basis where short term issues are concerned, and on an annual basis for those recommendations that require implementation in the subsequent budget cycle.

**Question:** Please provide the rate of implementation of recommendations in respect to *Barazas*?

**Response:** Implementation of recommendations emanating from previous *Barazas* ranges from 40-45 %.

**Question: Have Barazas, as a social accountability mechanism, fallen short of their stated goals; and if yes, would you attribute this to the absence of legal backing which other accountability tools enjoy?**

**Response:** The *Baraza* programme is a mechanism that broadly demonstrates government's commitment to facilitate citizens' exercise of their constitutional rights. However, there is need to back it up not only with the legal mechanisms, but also with more political will to help the programme achieve its stated accountability advocacy goals.

**Question: Government set up the Barazas as a platform for citizens to participate in the development cycle, particularly by monitoring the use of public resources in the delivery of local government services. Drawing on your experience, what would you say are the ways in which Barazas can be strengthened in order to become more effective tools for poverty alleviation?**

**Response:**

- Government needs to acknowledge and respond more promptly to citizens' development demands;
- Government needs to devise standard punitive measures to deal with those problematic implementers of government programmes and policies who are identified during the *Baraza* process;
- Civil society organisations should support the efforts of OPM and government more broadly to ensure that effective community sensitization and empowerment is carried out during *Barazas*;
- A more concerted lobbying effort is required to galvanize increased support from government and its partners to *Barazas* in order for such forums to be convened more frequently. This in turn will contribute towards local governments enhancing their good governance through the transparent delivery of community services;
- Capacity building earmarked for local leaders, including but not restricted to RDCs, District Chairpersons and Councillors, should be prioritised (in this regard, trainings relating to monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of government programmes and other issues raised at the *Barazas* is critical) in order to ensure a consistent feedback loop between communities and local government.

**Question: What is the funding allocated to the OPM in order to conduct this activity in the FY2016/17? In your view, is this sufficient (how much do you believe is needed to effectively carry out this function)?**

**Response:** In this FY2016/2017, we budgeted for 32 districts at 15,000,000/= each totalling to 480,000,000/=. We have so far received GoU funding of 60,000,000/= with which we have conducted 4 *Barazas*. We have not received over 400,000,000/= needed to conduct the remaining *Barazas* for the 28 districts.

**Question: Have you considered your office retaining an oversight role in respect to Barazas and decentralising their implementation to local governments (which would necessarily entail budgetary shifts to the respective local governments)?**

**Response:** Allowing the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to budget for *Baraza* activities would heavily jeopardise the impartiality of the entire *Baraza* exercise. In other words, if the CAO is the one to provide an accountability report to the community during the *Baraza*, then the forum would lose its intended purpose. We therefore need independent stakeholders to work with the OPM. Currently, the OPM sponsors and is responsible for the budgets of *Barazas*; it oversees the payment of funds to the RDCs in terms of a Memorandum

of Understanding formulated between the OPM and the Office of the RDCs. This arrangement assists the *Barazas* to be a highly objective process from inception to conclusion. Additionally, the RDCs' involvement in the *Baraza* process facilitates an opportunity for the institution to acquire a deeper understanding of relevant issues, making it better equipped to practically follow up on the concerns identified.

**Question: As the OPM, how have you supported the different local governments to embrace the *Barazas* as a mechanism for constant dialogue with service users instead of duty bearers perceiving *Barazas* as a confrontational forum?**

**Response:** We have involved civil society organisations, community based organisations, as well as religious, cultural and opinion leaders to sensitise both the community and service providers. During the sensitization campaigns, all parties have always been informed of their responsibility to account for among other things, how government funds are used to deliver services to citizens; the manner in which the services were used; the impact of the services on society etc. OPM has always made a point of informing duty bearers that *Barazas* are not intended to serve as a witch hunt, but rather an avenue for the disclosure of otherwise inaccessible performance indicators and information, which assist government significantly to recognise and reward positive efforts and to implement remedial action where implementation of activities is not yielding desired results.

**Question: Any final words?**

**Response:** *Barazas* are a means of strengthening the decentralization policy and democratization process. They are an effective mobilization strategy that enhances effective citizen participation and involvement in the national development process. The ultimate value addition of the *Barazas* has been the manner in which the downward accountability has been enhanced to improve quality of public service delivery and standards of living. The *Baraza* programme, therefore, has the potential to contribute significantly to the realization of the National Development Plan II and the vision 2020 if it is popularly supported and well implemented.

# The functioning and effectiveness of School Management Committees (SMCs)



**Moses Maena Musingo - Senior Education Officer, Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Sports**

For two consecutive years (FY2014-15 and FY2015-16), the Education and Sports Sector Annual Performance Review (ESSAPR) has focused on the theme: *Realigning School Governance and Management Towards Sustainable Quality of Education and Training Outcomes*. One objective of the 23<sup>rd</sup> ESSAPR, which concluded on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2016, was to assess the performance of Local Governments (LGs), Governing Councils, Boards of Governors (BoGs), School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parent Teachers Associations (PTAs) – all of which are essential partners with respect to the governance and management of educational institutions. The inclusion of school management bodies in such a review attests to the critical role envisaged for them by the Ministry of Education and Sports in terms of broader efforts to improve the quality of education. It is generally accepted that there is a positive correlation between the quality of a school's management structure and the quality of education offered by the institution.

Ugandan SMCs and BoGs derive their mandate from, and are constituted under the Education (Pre-primary, Primary and Post-primary) Act, 2008. The Second Schedule of the Act contains numerous regulations that set out the membership, formation and functional requirements of SMCs. In particular, *Regulation 15* states that, “[t]he head teacher shall be personally answerable to the Management Committee for the academic, financial, ethical, moral, social, domestic organization and conduct of the school.”

While the role of SMCs is clearly discernible from the Education Act, the functionality of these structures have in overwhelming instances proven to be mostly dysfunctional and ineffective - countrywide.

A report compiled during the 23<sup>rd</sup> ESSAPR field visits indicates that within the 24 sampled districts, only 61% of primary schools were deemed to have functioning SMCs; this despite District Education Officers approving



95% of the primary school SMCs they reviewed. Similarly, a paltry 41.4% of secondary schools were found to have functioning BoGs, in contrast to the 86% approved by the Minister of Education and Sports.

The report further identified the Financial and Development Committees to be the most active sub-committee of SMCs. However, this requires further investigation, as it may be attributable to improper pecuniary motivation. The other sub-committee, the General Purpose Sub-committee, which is tasked with looking at aspects of schooling such as academics and discipline, plays a very marginal supervisory role in terms of school management.

By and large, the ineffectiveness of SMCs is attributable to among other things: shortcoming of the existing policy framework and structural and supervisory weaknesses; all of which can be addressed. In the first instance, while the Act spells out the constituencies that must be represented on the SMCs, including among others, Old Boys (OBs)/Old Girls (OGs), Local Government leadership, parents and staff, there are no clear stipulations on the qualifications nominated representatives must possess. Consequently, persons who do not possess even the most basic competencies in education and institutional management find themselves appointed to SMCs, and assigned the onerous task of providing strategic guidance and supervision support to school administrators.

This situation is compounded by the District Education Office's (DEO) failure to adequately induct and sensitize newly convened SMCs. As a result, many SMCs and serving members stumble their way blindly through their tenure, with limited awareness and understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

Another worrying factor is that some SMC members put themselves forward for nomination with the expectation of financial remuneration for their service; and when this expectation is not realized, they resort to abandoning their mandate or harassing school heads for allowances.



**Pupils of Nyamabale primary school in Kyenjojo district at a school assembly**

A further complication is that while SMCs are mandated to play a dual oversight role in respect of school management and supervision in respect of head teachers, there isn't a clear reporting or accountability system in place by means of which to hold SMCs themselves accountable for their performance, actions/omissions and decisions. Officers from Local Government or the Ministry who visit schools in order to undertake inspection, monitoring, support and supervision only engage school administrators and staff, but not SMCs. This is a major failing, and one which invariably impedes the effectiveness of SMCs.

Prof. Nassozi K. Muwanga's paper entitled, "*Enhancing the role of Non-State Actors (NSA) in Governance and Management of Education and Training Institutions to Improve Quality of Education and Training in Uganda*", which was presented at the 23<sup>rd</sup> ESSAPR workshop, made several interesting recommendations. At a national strategic level, she motivated for focus to be on: building the capacity of school leadership; providing both monetary and non-monetary incentives; and clearly articulating governance structures for SMCs.

In terms of policy, she highlighted the need to review the Education Act and guidelines requiring SMCs to provide members with a basic level of education. Further recommendations included provision to be made for retired head teachers and other educationists to be included in SMCs; standardized induction/training/capacity building programs to be developed and implemented for governing bodies; and clear provision made for equitable gender and special needs representation.

At the district level, contextual targets should be set for SMCs, such as submission of reports to DEOs each quarter/term. The relationship between SMCs and PTAs may also need to be streamlined for greater efficiency and efficacy; a primary function of SMCs should be to create effective linkages between parents/communities and schools. They should also facilitate the participation of parents and communities in school-related planning as well as monitoring processes by means of existing regulations on citizens' access to information on budgets and transfers. Local leaders (LCs) should be trained on governance and accountability as well as roles and responsibilities of SMCs. A governance regulatory framework should be established to hold SMCs accountable for their performance.

One outstanding, perhaps controversial, issue that needs to be comprehensively addressed relates to the question of whether or not SMC members ought to be remunerated. Although the Education Act states that SMC members play a voluntary community service, this may need to be reconsidered as SMCs are tasked with a significant responsibility. However, extensive safeguards would need to be put in place; already, the permitted practice of awarding SMC members sitting allowances for meeting attendance is subject to abuse. Indeed, it has engendered a patronage and rent culture whereby head teachers, as accounting officers, hold SMCs at ransom by requiring them to make favourable decisions before the head teacher is willing to release their allowances. For the same reason, it may also be prudent to revisit head teachers' roles in relation to the formation of the SMCs to ensure that the head teacher does not succeed in unduly influencing the composition of the committee established to supervise him or her.

Effective SMCs and BoGs are a critical factor in the bid to realize the equitable provision of quality basic education to all Ugandans. However, mechanisms must be put in place to ensure that people with the desired competencies, skills and values are nominated to serve on these committees. Thereafter, a comprehensive reporting, monitoring, supervision and accountability system needs to be entrenched, in order for the impact of SMCs and their functionaries to be measured consistently and comprehensively. It is only once such a system is in place that we can demonstrably claim positive impact.

# The need to strengthen Health Unit Management Committees (HUMCs) to improve health service delivery

**Ali Walimbwa - Senior Planner, Ministry of Health**

**H**ealth Unit Management Committees (HUMCs), which derive their mandate from the Constitution of Uganda, the Local Government Act, 2007 and the National Health Policy, have a broad function that includes planning, monitoring, evaluation, reporting and advisory on multiple aspects of health service delivery.

HUMCs are appointed by the respective lower level councils, and have as their objective the empowerment of communities in order to promote active participation in the management of health services. In addition, they seek to enhance the decision making, general administration and management as well as resource mobilization for Health Units. They also ensure greater transparency in financial management so as to improve the quality of Health Units' service delivery.

Given the important role played by HUMCs, many stakeholders have taken keen interest in their functionality. Indeed, in the Hospital Census undertaken by the Ministry of Health in 2014, all regional and national referral hospitals reported having Boards, while 94% of Health Centre IVs and general hospitals have HUMCs in place. The census also revealed that majority of community members also believed in having HUMCs.

HUMCs constitute part of the health system's management structure, for which reason both state and non-state actors have made it a priority to assess their functionality with the aim of improving them. Functionality is assessed using parameters such as duly appointed members, full constitution and induction of members, evidence of regularly convened meetings, implementation of resolutions made, availability and use of HUMC guidelines and regular support supervision of the facilities, among others.

Despite their potential, these committees face a number of challenges. Prominent among these is inadequate funds to facilitate the convening of meetings, which in turn has implications on the number and frequency of meetings and related deliberations.

Whereas the minimum education level of members is an ordinary level certificate, some members of the HUMCs are disadvantaged by their inability to fully comprehend their roles. A report by Intra Health International documenting an assessment<sup>1</sup> of the functionality of Hospital Boards and HUMCs across Uganda identified unclear terms of reference as a significant challenge faced by HUMCs. It further established that 58% of HUMC members interviewed acknowledged not being conversant with their roles.

To counter this, local governments have reached out to different non-state actors, in particular Non-Governmental Organisations, to assist with the training and capacity building of HUMCs on their roles and responsibilities. A case in point is Kayunga District Local Government, which is partnering with both Intra Health International Uganda and the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER) to train the newly appointed HUMCs on their roles and responsibilities in December 2016.

Another challenge to HUMCs identified in the Intra Health International assessment is the delayed appointment of new members which results in committee members serving even after the expiry of their terms of office. It was noted that some HUMCs members had been in office for up to three years after expiry of their term.

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<sup>1</sup> Conducted under the auspices of the 'Strengthening Human Resources for Health Project 2016'

The Intra Health International Uganda report found that 98% of health facilities surveyed had functional health unit management boards and committees; 91% in East Central region, though 39% of these had operated beyond their terms of office. In the eastern region, 96% of health facilities had functional HUMCs; however, about 78% of these were operating after the expiry of their terms, and 33% had no operational guidelines.

Mistrust of HUMCs by health workers and resistance to collaborative engagement was another challenge identified. A major concern raised in the report was the significant power wielded by the committee secretary who is also the In-charge of the health facility, which was deemed to compromise the oversight role of the committees.

The manner in which HUMCs are appointed also has implications on how committees respond to community concerns. A collaborative research conducted in 2014 on health systems governance by the Centre for Health, Human Rights and Development (CEHURD) found that in many instances, committees are perceived to have greater allegiance to their appointing authority thus ignoring their mandate and responsibility to the community they are supposed to serve. In another study by Medicines Transparency Alliance (MeTA, 2014) on client satisfaction with service levels in Ugandan public health facilities, it was recommended that the functionality of HUMCs should be reviewed and strengthened.

**Table showing functionality of Hospital Boards and HUMCs countrywide (Intra Health International Assessment Report, 2016)**

Region	Total # assessed	Total # of Functional HUMCs/HBs	# with recommended # of members	# of HUMCs inducted	# conducting quarterly meetings	# with HUMC guidelines	# of HFs implementing HUMC resolutions	# of HFs conducting regular supervision at facility
Western	258	250 (96.9%)	129	122	124	135	112	105
East Central	369	337 (91.3%)	232	152	119	118	124	90
West Nile	200	199 (99.5%)	126	192	191	142	160	135
Karamoja	118	110 (93.2%)	97	99	95	61	66	50
Eastern	193	184 (95.3%)	177	86	193	105	—*	97
Total	1,138	1080 (94.9%)	761	651	722	561	462*	477

### Recommendations as per the Intra Health International report

- There is need for regular induction and trainings of HUMCs
- Increment of the budget for health units to implement HUMCs decisions to facilitate HUMCs activities
- Timely appointments of competent members of the HUMCs after the expiry of their term of office
- Sensitization of community members about the existence of HUMCs and their right to demand action and feedback
- Timely provision of guidelines for the smooth operation of the HUMCs



- Regular reports and updates to both lower councils and community members in order to strengthen accountability of HUMCs

The Ministry of Health and other stakeholders need to conduct regular support supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the performance of HUMCs so as to make them responsive to community expectations. In addition to this and based on various assessments and reviews, the Ministry of Health should also be open to policy updates to address the dynamic needs of communities with regard to HUMCs.

# The role of Water User Committees (WUCs) in the rural water supply service delivery model

**T**he Water Act provides for the formation of Water User Groups and Sanitation Committees to collectively plan and manage water resources, as well as collect revenue for the maintenance of these bodies from persons using the water supply system. These Water User Groups are commonly referred to as Water User Committees (WUCs);

The Joint Water and Environment Sector Strategic Plan (JWESSP) stipulates the institutional sector framework consisting of various stakeholders including line ministries, local governments, government agencies, non-governmental and community based organisations, and the private sector. Through this plan, the government endeavours to ensure access to water by communities across the country by availing resources to construct water sources.

The investment in infrastructure by the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) through the local government presents a need to ensure that the facilities remain functional and render the expected service to the communities, thus necessitating the continuous Operation and Maintenance (O&M) of these facilities.

The O&M framework for rural water supply is in line with the Community Based Management System (CBMS) under which community members are responsible for the O&M of their water supplies, while Sub-Counties and districts are responsible for offering them back up support. Communities are therefore expected to formulate an O&M plan to guide their activities as well as take charge of their roles in ensuring functionality of the newly invested facilities. In so doing, Water and Sanitation Committees or Water User Committees are formed. In order for these committees to deliver on their mandate, they are expected to receive support from the various actors as indicated in the institutional set up.

The District Implementation Manual 2013 refers to a Water and Sanitation Committee (WSC) or Water User Committee (WUC) as the executive organ of a water user group and should be established at each improved water point. The various water user communities (households, schools, industries etc) organise themselves by forming WUCs to oversee the operation and maintenance of the water facilities in their localities. The implementation manual further stipulates the roles of the WUC as;

- Appoint water source caretakers to manage the day today O&M of water facilities; including cleaning the surroundings, carrying out preventive maintenance and minor repairs of the water facilities
- Ensure proper use and maintenance of the water facilities
- Collect cash or contributions in-kind from water users for the purpose of maintaining the water facilities
- Open a bank account and ensure safe custody of money collected
- Select technicians; 1- 2 Hand Pump Mechanics (HPMs), plumbers and Gravity Flow Scheme Attendants (GFSAs) for training by the district
- Pay for the services of the technicians
- Report to the Sub-County repair requirements that are beyond the financial capacity of the water user communities and technical capacity of the technicians (e.g. replacing pipes and desilting)
- Pay for the cost of the spare-parts for repairing the water facilities

# Functionality of Water User Committees (WUCs): A case of Kayunga district

Margret Galimuka - Kayunga District Information Officer

There is tremendous progress in the formation of the WUCs, particularly amongst the rural communities. Kayunga district has several WUCs in the various sub-counties.

According to a County Water Officer in Kayunga district, Paul Luboya, the functionality of WUCs in the district stands at 87%. He identified the WUCs in charge of the Bbaale rural growth centre piped water supply, the Kitabi borehole in Kangulumira rural growth centre, the Kitwe borehole in Kayonza sub-county, and the Kinyala borehole in Nazigo sub county as the best performing WUCs in the district. He attributed their performance to the good cooperation between the WUCs and water source users.

*“Although the committee members take the lead, they cannot make much headway without the cooperation of the water users themselves because when the users promptly pay their fees, operation and maintenance of the water facility is made easy”<sup>1</sup>*

According to Luboya, the water users promptly contribute to the operation and maintenance of the water source as required by the law, whereby each household pays Shs2,000 and water vendors pay Shs5,000 per month. For example, when he visited Kinyala borehole during the WUC's Annual General Meeting in July 2016, the WUC had collected and banked water fees for a period of six months amounting to Shs1,800,000. Using some of these funds, the committee procured garden sprayers that it hires out to community members, which has greatly contributed to the development of the village.

Transparency and accountability to water user fee payers and the broader community was also noted as a contributing factor to the smooth functionality of the WUCs in the district. WUCs that repair defective boreholes without soliciting additional fees have earned greater confidence from their communities.

WUCs are also viewed as a mechanism for uniting diverse communities residing in the same location – especially since water is a basic need for everyone in the community, irrespective of ethnic background or income bracket. As such, the attendance rate of WUC meetings is generally high, with most community members expressing the sentiment that they cannot afford to miss out. This has also contributed to the functionality of many such committees.

## Challenges faced by WUCs

However, despite the abovementioned successes of many WUCs, there are notable challenges experienced by other groups, which has even resulted in their collapse within the first year of water source installation.

According to Mubiru Robert, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer in Kayunga district, knowledge deficits as well as negative attitudes or beliefs among some district communities prevents citizens from fully embracing modern planning in water supply and sanitation. For example, some fishing communities insist that they do not need pit latrines because they reside near what they believe to be an inexhaustible water source; others believe that using pit latrines brings bad luck, especially for pregnant women. Such beliefs, which predominate easily in communities with extensively low literacy levels, have a significant and negative effect on the demand for services.

<sup>1</sup> Paul Luboya - County Water Officer in Kayunga district

Luboya Paul<sup>2</sup>, attributes the non-functionality of WUCs in some areas to inadequate local government supervision. He mentioned that community development officers, health assistants and other staff in the water sector who are the immediate supervisors for such committees, rarely supervise or check-up on the functionality of the WUCs or conduct assessments of the sanitation conditions in the communities which use the water sources.

Some WUCs are not trained on their roles and responsibilities, notwithstanding the fact that WUC members are supposed to receive regular training on how to manage water sources. However, it has been noted that some training is only conducted when new sources are being installed, with the result that successive members miss out on trainings since these committee members have a two-year term limit. For example, Tindiyan borehole WUC in Kayonza sub county was not aware about its role of maintaining proper sanitation especially related to clean and safe water management by ensuring that users collect water using clean jerry cans. This also contributed to a cholera outbreak in the village.



**This borehole in Kumi municipal council is the main source of water for the residents. There is no running water and many other bore holes have low water yield capacity**

There is also lack of commitment from some of the WUCs, who neglect or even abdicate their responsibilities rendering their role redundant. This can be attributed to the voluntary service that the WUCs render to the community. However, in some instances, some WUCs don't conduct regular meetings for fear of being

<sup>2</sup> County Water Officer in Kayunga district



asked to account for funds collected<sup>3</sup>. For example, Wabukwa WUC in Kikwanya parish in Kangulumira sub county overstayed in power because their borehole had taken long to break down. The community could not understand the role of the WUC and the WUC couldn't organise meetings. At the beginning, when the borehole was sunk, the WUC collected fees and never accounted for it. The community lost trust in the WUCs and could not ask users to contribute when the borehole eventually broke down.

Poor management of meetings is another major issue affecting the functionality of WUCs. Some meetings are called without a predetermined agenda; in other cases, the WUC chairpersons, secretaries and even members do not have a clear comprehension of their functions. Consequently, meeting discussions and recommendations are not well documented making implementation and follow up a cumbersome process.

Political interference has also affected the performance of WUCs. Some political leaders wrongfully advise water users not to pay their fees, reasoning that it is the responsibility of the government to repair broken boreholes. However, in terms of the framework, government only assumes responsibility for major repairs, which are beyond the competence of WUCs' pump mechanics. Such repairs must feature in the approved local government work plan. Relatedly, Kanjuki borehole WUC in Kayunga sub county stopped charging fees and when the borehole broke down there were no funds to repair it. Users claimed that the area Member of Parliament had promised to repair all boreholes that break.

Other examples from Kayunga illustrating the challenges of the functionality of WUCs are: the borehole of Kawomya in Kangulumira sub county failed to get a functional WUC due to unclear boundaries because it is located between the two villages of Kawomya and Kavuleso while the WUC of Wantente borehole in Kiwangula parish Busaana sub county became non functional because they couldn't charge users fees due to the poor quality of water which is salty in nature

### **Way forward to ensure full functionality of WUCs**

Effective supervision and monitoring of WUCs by the local government should be prioritized in order to ascertain whether and the extent to which they are effectively fulfilling their roles and responsibilities as stipulated. WUCs should feel encouraged and motivated by regularly supervisory visits, which they should regard and use as an opportunity to address any grievances or challenges directly with their local government representative.

Regular training for WUCs by local government should be undertaken to ensure that all members, even newly appointed ones, understand their roles and responsibilities – particularly as it pertains to the management of their water sources.

A mechanism should be put in place to ensure that routine elections are carried out as required by law so as to ensure that effective and efficient members serve on WUCs and to avoid the practice of members serving beyond their terms.

<sup>3</sup> It should not be assumed that this is necessarily because funds are misappropriated: in some cases WUCs simply lack the necessary financial accounting skills to assume this responsibility competently.

# A critique of social accountability mechanisms at local government level



**Q&A with Hon. Proscovia Salaamu Musumba, FDC Party Vice Chairperson, Kamuli District Chairperson (2012-2016) and Member of Parliament Bugabula County South in Kamuli District (1996-2006)**

**Question:** After only six months as Kamuli District Chairperson, you received accolades from the Local Council Score Card social accountability mechanism of the Advocate's Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE) and Uganda Local Governments Association (ULGA): how did you do accomplish this?

**Response:** I went to Kamuli to demonstrate to this country that we can serve our people if we choose to. I went to prove a point that you can actually improve peoples' lives through political office and that it is doable at local government level. Local government is the best place because it is the frontline of service delivery. I also wanted to make a point, as both a woman leader and opposition leader, that I can make a difference. However, this requires commitment, hard work, and knowledge; best of all is that I have had the opportunity to serve my people at close range. My motivation was that if I could put a smile on someone's face, then that serves as my reward, since there was no money, no official car to do my work and inadequate support but this did not diminish my love for the job! I also wanted to take the expertise from Parliament down to local government; and to make use of my networks, drawing on their diverse knowledge, skills and good will to impact the welfare of people. That is what I set out to do, and this is what I ultimately did.

**Question:** What is your take on social accountability mechanisms used in local government service delivery?

**Response:** There is such a big disconnect between political leaders and citizens in this country – so much so that the social accountability mechanisms are not even fully trusted by the community. I attribute this to the feedback mechanism, which has really setback the whole process. When the Office Prime Minister (OPM) comes with, for example, the *Baraza*, people ask: 'so what is going to change'? They believe that the OPM representatives have come simply to accomplish accountability, but not to listen to community members' complaints. The loss of trust is thus a significant hindrance. People say: 'do not endanger yourself by providing feedback', because when you do so you directly attack someone's job, for which they will come after you. They will discriminate against you and you have no fallback position, so the result will be that you displace yourself from society. Consequently, people are reluctant to be open about service delivery, preferring

instead to engage in it secretly.

**Question: How did you address this dual challenge of diminished trust in the social accountability process and the reluctance of people to participate for fear of negative repercussions if they raised concerns?**

**Response:** My weekly calendar was designed in such a way that I prioritised feedback sessions. Monday was for district executive committee (cabinet), Tuesday and Wednesday for personal work, Thursday was fieldwork and Friday was a 'Political Clinic' where anybody would walk in to address any issue/ matters they want to bring to the attention of the district chairperson – political head. This open day for my constituents, was their *Baraza*: people could see me in private to raise any political issues affecting them personally or impacting their community. I would also receive, in confidence, free intelligence and feedback from the community; and people were confident that I would work to resolve their complaints without necessarily exposing them to danger. Currently, there is a practice of middlemen between political leaders and citizens. I chose to cut out the middlemen by going on radio to inform people that Friday is their day. Of course it took a bit of time for people to respond – they thought it was just another lie. However, over time they came to understand that I was sincere and that the Friday clinic was a safe space where they could raise important issues with the assurance that I would look into their complaints without jeopardizing/compromising their safety/wellbeing. My style of leadership is, therefore, one that seeks to respond to problems and provide solutions in as short a time as possible. I have found the 'Political Clinic' to be the most efficient mechanism for feedback and service delivery.

Another motivating factor was that people who were reported to be engaging in compromising activities, knew that they could lose their jobs! This is because I was a person who was very familiar with the administrative mechanisms and legal framework. I knew what to do to follow up on concerns and I was also good at writing. People got tired of my letters; but I needed a paper trail for people to understand the official nature of this intervention. By contrast, most of the work at district level is undertaken in a *laissez-faire* manner – people treat the workplace like an extension of their homes. People do not meet deadlines, do not respond to letters, and do not take instructions. I would give instructions and follow them up and even give sanctions. I must say I had a very good Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), who wanted to do good, so we were working as a team. There were many distortions but the two of us did move things.

**Question: Access to information is a fundamental and essential prerequisite for political participation; how did you ensure that people had access to information?**

**Response:** Through the 'Political Clinic', I was able to reach many more people within the district; and this helped me to identify what and where the obstacles were, and how to address them. I featured on radio programmes every month, which provided me with an opportunity to disseminate information – including KBS, Ssebo FM and Baaba FM. If someone had not heard me on one radio station, they would catch me on another.

**Question: How did you ensure the participation of vulnerable groups, such as women and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), in the citizen engagement processes that you established?**

**Response:** In the 'Political Clinic', I made provision to reimburse the transportation costs of PWDs and elderly/senior citizens. I was personally motivated to do this, because I also wanted to conduct research to ascertain what issues were affecting all people within my district. Hence, the reimbursement for transport acted as an incentive to encourage people to come forward and learn to speak. 'Basogas speak with their eyes not their mouth'; yet I wanted them to adapt to open speech as a new governance approach.

**Question: What factors hinder citizens from participating in local government processes?**

**Response:** There are several factors that discourage citizens from participating in local government processes:

- Citizens lack confidence that they will be safe if they divulge information, and they doubt that their issues will be handled sensitively and confidentially. They may perceive reporting to be a potential source or cause of trouble for themselves.
- They are also very suspicious of political officials and institutions.
- There are also practical impediments such as transportation costs, for example, which make participation prohibitive.
- A lack of knowledge or awareness is another issue: oftentimes people do not know that they are entitled to have a say in what gets done within the district. They see this as agitation, rather than a right – the mindset is that of “*Omwami kyakoba...*” meaning “I agree with everything by the ‘authority’.”
- Citizens who do participate are often angry, disappointed and frustrated; therefore, the culture of dialogue and feedback becomes antagonistic rather than seeking to problem solve or resolve issues. This is why it is important to manage the process well, to avoid it becoming misinterpreted or misused.
- It is very important to observe the highest standards of confidentiality because many of the complaints are against people from the community. One would say, “*Iwe oyenda kulemesa mwana wange mulimu,*” meaning “you want to cause the dismissal of my child from the job.” Whoever you try to deal with to improve service delivery is a breadwinner, therefore you are viewed as a direct threat to a family or clan. But this only means that issues must be handled sensitively and with a level of maturity.

**Question: How did you deal with some of the above mentioned challenges such as encouraging people to participate without fear of reprisal?**

**Response:** In some of the *Barazas*, we asked people to write down their complaints so that they were submitted anonymously. But you know that even such an approach has limitations. This is because many people cannot write or struggle to fully express themselves even through writing. Hence I decided to incorporate the Friday ‘Political Clinic’. Impromptu supervision of government facilities also helped a lot.

**Question: Did you apply specific mechanisms to different sectors of service delivery?**

**Response:** During the time I was involved in the health sector, new mechanisms were employed. Cordaid [a development aid organization], for example, which funded Kamuli District health facilities, rolled out a research-based feedback mechanism in the facilities it supported. Satisfaction surveys were conducted with clients after receipt of services at health facilities and the feedback was provided in confidence. In addition, the Department of Health conducted audits under the State House Health Monitoring Unit, which was led by Dr. Diana Atwine. This process was highly effective, it was what you might call sentinel surveillance.

In contrast, however, the Department of Education had a very weak review mechanism infrastructure. I never ever saw a Minister of Education or an Inspectorate of Education from Kampala in the three years I was district chairperson. The ones I interacted with were from UNICEF and NGOs.

**Question: What would you (Kamuli District), as one of the beneficiaries, say was the impact of the USAID funded Strengthening Decentralization for Sustainability (SDS) programme that supports local governments to improve social service delivery?**

**Response:** This programme was also implemented in the health sector and it had positive results; my only criticism would be that it had limited contact with the community. On a positive note, it was good because it provided periodic systems analysis, which feedback was brought to the attention of the district; through this engagement, health systems could be reviewed and programmes adjusted accordingly. These reporting mechanisms relied on consistent interaction with people [individuals] on the ground and the solicitation of their feedback.

### **Question: Are Water User Committees (WUCs), Health Unit Management Committees (HUMCs), and School Management Committees (SMCs) functional?**

**Response:** It is unfortunate that the people who serve on these committees view them as an opportunity to access a stipend. If one looks at the SMCs, for instance, whenever the committee has a school visit, they expect to receive lunch and an allowance, which suggests that the biggest motivation to serve is the source of “income”. It is also a status enhancing opportunity within the community; even the process of election is a big event, and an opportunity for councilors to reward their agents. Unfortunately, less attention is given to the significant challenges inherent in school management. The preoccupation is on self-enrichment and self-promotion; where a committee is not in consensus about “eating” money together, then you find that there is conflict. So this is a highly contested and conflict prone area. SMCs are increasingly not about the community participating in and contributing to school planning, well-being, growth and long-term sustainability. If we just look at the way head teachers are appointed; it is a disaster!

### **Question: Do the HUMCs understand their roles and responsibilities?**

**Response:** I don't think HUMCs are adequately instructed and trained on their functions and how to effectively implement their responsibilities. Consequently, you will find a hospital, which does not have a duly constituted hospital board; but when you take the names of board nominees to the council, people do not look at the merits of their qualifications, they simply want to know why this one, why not this one?

### **Question: How about WUCs: are they functional and effective?**

**Response:** Water User Committees (WUCs) are an interesting case because communities take long to renew leadership; the leadership becomes tired and expired such that it loses its meaning. WUCs only seem to function when a borehole is broken, but even then it can take so long to repair. However, I think all in all WUCs function more effectively than SMCs and HUMCs because water is an essential resource that is used daily, so it is prioritized and addressed with a greater sense of urgency. WUCs are also a catalyst for community dialogue; when a water source breaks down, the committee calls for community action faster than health or education.

### **Question: Are the Barazas implemented by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) in local governments an effective mechanism of engagement between leaders and citizens?**

**Response:** Unfortunately, OPM-implemented *Barazas* are not very well organized. In my view this is because OPM contracts a service provider. Someone walks in from Jinja, sets up a tent, records the number of people present, when the Prime Minister arrives he is not provided with an account of the key concerns – it is just a mechanical exercise. There is very little prior input from the local government, neither is there a mechanism to understand what the issues were and how they have been handled. Therefore, on each occasion people ask, “*So the issues we submitted last year, what have you done?*” There is no feedback mechanism, which means that it is not possible to track progress and accomplishments. You can be forgiven for thinking that the *Baraza* is an accountability end in itself: that they just want to reflect on their checklist that a *Baraza* has been convened. And by the time they start people are already tired and lack enthusiasm – how much can you really accomplish if the *baraza* starts at 2pm?

### **Question: In your view, what impact would it make to decentralize Barazas to the local government?**

**Response:** I don't think the OPM *Barazas* should be decentralized. I think they should continue to do the *Barazas*, but they should coordinate with different cabinet ministers. They should have a checklist with which to monitor and track progress, possibly even across ministries, so that it serves as a mechanism that facilitates communication and collaboration. I don't even know whether government knows at any given time what they have dispatched to which district.



**Question: How can *Barazas* be improved as a mechanism of engagement between leaders and citizens in order to improve service delivery?**

**Response:** *Barazas* should be structured, and identifying the right representative(s) to attend is equally important. There should be a live broadcast on all the local radio stations. It would also be beneficial to convene *Barazas* more often – at least twice in a calendar year. And as I’ve noted repeatedly, it is essential to follow up on issues raised.

**Question: Do you think social accountability could be used to improve livelihoods and service delivery?**

**Response:** Social accountability ultimately impacts on poverty by optimizing government expenditure, thereby enhancing the impact of service delivery. When I was growing up we were not rich, but we lived well; and education is what made us. I always feel guilty that very few people, if any, can make it to my position. Why should it be impossible to break the chains of poverty? For me education is the door to opening opportunity. But this depends on the way education is managed.

In-breeding is a serious problem at local government level, because you find that a person is born in *Namwenda* [village in Kamuli District], studies there, marries there, works there and dies there. Their entire world is circumscribed to one village, they do not have prospects elsewhere. And if your opportunities depend on who you know within government and those same officials only perform well where they stand to benefit, this leads to compromised quality service delivery. It is thus imperative that we foster an understanding of decentralization within people in order to combat all of the negative impediments to social progress – in-breeding is just one of many serious challenges facing local governance. You find that a family or clan shamelessly takes up all the jobs in local government so service delivery becomes compromised because no one checks on the other. That is a structural problem with decentralization.

**Question: How can we improve service delivery in local governments?**

**Response:** I think it is an easy undertaking, by the way. The first place to start is to check the qualifications and competences of the technical staff at the districts. You will find that many do not use their names; many are not qualified but are appointed on a kinship basis and therefore cannot deliver skills they do not have. This problem would be significantly improved if the Ministry of Local Government together with the Ministry of Public Service enforce compliance with standards they have set. They are putting a lot of pressure on the Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) to uproot endemic nepotism, conflict of interest, sheer incompetence and lack of capacity. We do not currently have a mechanism that makes it easy to dismiss staff fraudulently appointed, particularly because there are very few supervisors willing to provide a negative evaluation against a colleague, even if it is merited. It seems the only way staff at a district level lose a job is by dying. In some cases I reviewed people’s work and could determine that they had clearly not attended school. However everyone fears to discuss this because they fear being bewitched. Communities get trapped within their limitations, these incompetent fellows never write reports on time, never meet deadlines, they pull back the whole of society, and that responsibility is left to the CAO. You cannot expect service delivery when the CAO is the only one working.

**Question: Final remarks?**

**Response:** Feedback is critical. There is a need to set up systems and feedback mechanisms that function in a simplified way. While these mechanisms are available, the failure to deploy resources seriously undermines service delivery. For example, people would call me asking, “*Why is this lorry offloading medicine at a private house?*” I would say “*Hold on*”, pick up another phone and call police to go to the location and arrest the culprits. People need to know that they will be safe when they report. Why wouldn’t service delivery happen with the availability of all these mechanisms?

# Citizen participation in local government service delivery



**By Lilian Nakamatte - Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Luuka District**

**T**he Local Government Act provides for decentralization at all levels of local government to ensure good governance and citizens' democratic participation in – and control of – decision making. Decentralization as conceived in Uganda situates local government at the frontline of service delivery; because these services are planned in a consultative and participatory manner with communities, local governments are well placed to prioritize, cost and prepare on an annual basis a District Development Plan (DDP) to guide implementation of service delivery.

However, although local government service delivery is premised on the notion of “*participatory*” design, formulation and implementation, citizen participation and contribution have been observed to be gradually diminishing. But why is this – particularly in light of the fact that citizens have a right to public services, which is the obligation of local government to deliver? One reason could be due to insufficient budgetary allocations by the central government, local governments lack the resources to fully realize citizens' aspirations. Consequently, they must prioritize services and implement in incremental phases over successive years. Unfortunately, this mode of service delivery is not clearly understood by citizens; hence the loss of morale, increasing apathy and reluctance to participate in processes related to local government service delivery.

High levels of corruption, characterized by public servants' embezzlement of obscene amounts of public funds intended to deliver services, have also contributed to citizens' withdrawal from participation. Citizens are even more demoralized when corrupt officials act with impunity, escaping any form of accountability, and instead seemingly being glorified and remaining in office.

A general lack of civic competence among local communities has also affected their confidence to demand

and participate in public service delivery. In most cases, local government institutions prepare client charters, which express their commitment to serve citizens diligently. Although these client charters make provision for feedback from communities, many citizens do not exercise this right in some instances because they are not familiar with the documents and the rights contained therein; therefore, it is incumbent on local governments to engage in public outreach and sensitization such that citizens become aware of this accountability platform.

There are other measures that government can take to increase citizen participation – particularly that of vulnerable and marginalized groups – in service delivery processes; these include but are not restricted to the following:

- Government should plan, budget for and intensify civic education among citizens in order to empower them with information on their rights. This will put citizens in a position where they are able to demand both services and accountability from an informed perspective.
- Government should intensify the fight to end corruption in public service so as to enhance the general public's trust in governance and public participatory processes. Although Uganda has a national anti-corruption strategy, this is rarely implemented; local governments are also struggling to come up with customized anti-corruption strategies of their own. However, if there is political and bureaucratic will, then anti-corruption strategies can be successful in curbing the looting of the public purse.
- Local governments need to develop coherent and cohesive communication strategies in order to disseminate consistent messages across the country, thereby diminishing the potential for confusion and erroneous information. This strategy should be consultatively prepared to ensure increased participation of communities including especially vulnerable and marginalized groups.

# ISER's experience of implementing health *Barazas* in Kayunga District

Allana Kembabazi and Margaret Nabasiye - Right to Health Program, ISER

The Initiative for Social and Economic Rights' (ISER) through the Right to Health program partnered with Kayunga district to convene quarterly *Barazas* discussing matters of health. To ensure broad participation, in particular of community members living far from district headquarters (which is where Government *Barazas* were largely confined previously), these quarterly health *Barazas* are held in different sub-counties; prioritizing those generally not consulted by district leadership.

*Barazas* organized by ISER bring together district and sub county officials, including both elected officials such as the Chairperson LC5 and Secretary for Health and non-elected representatives or technocrats such as the District Health Officer (who oversees the provision of health services in the district) and the Chief Administrative Officer. Other people in attendance include the Chairperson of the Health Unit Management Committee, Village Health Teams, In-charges of health facilities, health workers and the community at large.

ISER's Community Outreach Officer, together with officials from the District Health Office and the Sub County, mobilize communities and community leaders to attend the *Barazas* which commence with an educational segment on the right to health, followed by the sub-county In-charges' report on the drugs and health budget received for each health facility. The community is then accorded an opportunity to raise their concerns and get responses from duty bearers.

The discussion between the community and duty bearers is facilitated by ISER's Community Health Advocates – community members trained on the right to health who undertake, in a voluntary capacity, annual community monitoring of the realization of the right to health – together with an official from the sub county.

## **Are *Barazas* effective, and what lessons has ISER derived from facilitating them?**

Firstly, *Barazas* enable community members to engage with, demand accountability and receive instant feedback from officials responsible for implementing campaigns within their communities whom they do not regularly meet or know. In some of the sub-counties in which we have held *Barazas*, community members have noted that they rarely get consulted or have an opportunity to dialogue with their leaders.

The district officials also benefit from the *Barazas* by receiving feedback on failures or omissions that may not have been brought to their attention, especially in remote parts of the district. In some instances, the issues can be quite easily resolved, for example taking measures to ensure that health units constantly post information on drugs received, or making accessible the contact number of the In-charge mandated to receive complaints pertaining to a specific health facility. However, it was also noted that some issues cannot be quickly resolved, for example decisions relating to drug stock-out may require implementation of protracted procurement procedures. Nevertheless, the *Barazas* provide an opportunity for the district to report on the measures it is taking to address the issue. During one of the *Barazas* for example, the district leadership pledged to address the issue during the budget consultation processes occurring nationally.

## **The need for a feedback mechanism**

Following every *Baraza*, ISER writes a report that highlights the issues raised by the community, as well as the responses and commitments made by duty bearers, the community, ISER and other civil society organizations. This report is shared with the District Health Office for circulation to the leadership; ISER follows up on district commitments to track implementation. The issues highlighted in the report inform ISER's national and international advocacy on the right to health, and where the state fails to fulfil its human rights obligations, the organization might contemplate a litigation strategy.





Some of the participants interact with duty bearers at the ISER health *Baraza* held in September 2016 in Kangulumira sub county

While some issues require ISER to conduct policy analysis to ensure that the feedback received from officials is truly in line with the policies that govern the right to health, others require follow up with the Ministry of Health, and others also require an advocacy effort through mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review.

What ISER has learned is that it is crucial to engage in documentation and follow up of issues raised by communities; in the absence of this, it is far more difficult to confidently identify community grievances and to monitor implementation of the measures intended to effect social change, and to hold public officials accountable for failure to effectively deliver on their mandates – particularly with respect to issues requiring attention beyond the date on which the *Baraza* is hosted.

### **Barazas need to be conducted regularly and consistently**

In some of the communities in which ISER works, community members display significant hostility towards political leaders, which stems from community members' understandable anger and frustration over the poor state of health facilities, persistent drug stock shortages, and the like. Research conducted by ISER's social accountability program has shown that there is a correlation between a community's anger towards state officials and the extent (or lack thereof) of consultation. The unfortunate result is a negative cycle. Community hostility makes state functionaries who are apprehensive of these dynamics reluctant to attend *Barazas* for fear they will be attacked; which in turn, undermines *Barazas*, which are effective only when they facilitate genuine dialogue as opposed to being a platform for finger pointing or insults.



Similarly, when *Barazas* are held infrequently and at extensive intervals, community frustration builds, particularly when leaders are perceived not to hear or prioritise pressing concerns, resulting in unconstructive dialogue.

### Address the fear of retaliation

At some of the *Barazas* held by ISER's Right to Health program, community members noted that they were hesitant to highlight failures at certain health facilities for fear of retaliation by duty bearers. At one *Baraza*, elderly community members attributed the predominance of youthful contributions to this pervasive fear among older representatives. ISER's research has found that there are officials who take note of individuals perceived to "speak against them" at such dialogues, with the aim of retaliating by ensuring their exclusion from certain government services. To mitigate against this, ISER meets with the district leadership prior to convening the *Barazas* in order to both highlight the benefits of community feedback for their work and to reiterate to all officials that retaliation is counterproductive and will not be tolerated. It is encouraging to note that to date ISER has not received a complaint regarding an actual incident of retaliation following the *Barazas* the organization has co-convened.

### Work with the district

ISER has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the district regulating its organization and co-convening of *Barazas* together with the district. The organization was motivated to enter this partnership for two reasons; firstly, cooperation of the district is necessary in order for the *Barazas* to be productive and constructive. *Barazas* are more fruitful when district officials are in attendance, and are willing to engage with community members in an effort to address their issues. In Kayunga, the local government has been very supportive – the technical wing in particular has sought to consistently deal with the key issues raised in order to see them rectified. Having the local government present to listen, provide input and highlight its own challenges enables communities and civil society at large to identify the bottlenecks impeding service delivery and to support government to address these challenges.

Secondly, the sustainability of *Barazas* requires both the district and community to take ownership of the mechanism. ISER hopes that these *Barazas* persist irrespective of whether or not ISER continues to work in



A woman raising a health issue in Kitimbwa sub county at a health *Baraza* held in November 2016

the district. However, this cannot happen unless the district itself assumes ownership of the *Barazas* by for example, scheduling these *Barazas* into quarterly plans and officials, in particular sub-county officials, engaging in mobilisation activities to ensure broad participation of community members in the *Barazas*. Moreover, the existence of the MOU between ISER and the district will ensure that *Barazas* are a priority that supersedes the term of office of any one district leader.

### **Invest in capacity building**

ISER intentionally sets aside time for education on the right to health at the start of each *Baraza* in order to highlight state obligations and citizens' rights communities may not be aware of, for example their right to participate in the planning and implementation of health care measures, and principles such as non-discrimination. ISER has noted that this results in more fruitful discussions.

Capacity building should however continue beyond the *Barazas*; for example, it has been noted that Health Unit Management Committees (HUMCs) often lack clarity and orientation on their roles and responsibilities and require training to be truly effective as an accountability mechanism, especially since they play a critical role in monitoring the right to health. ISER is partnering with the district to train HUMCs on the right to health and their role in monitoring the realization of the right to health at health units.

### ***Barazas* cannot be a one size fits all approach**

Each community is different, and no *Baraza* will be the same. Being cognizant of community dynamics and working with community members and sub-county leadership when mobilizing for the *Baraza* enables ISER to tailor *Barazas* to meet the needs of the hosting communities.

### **Continue to hold smaller dialogues with duty bearers**

*Barazas* are a powerful mechanism. However, they are large gatherings and for this reason not everyone present may feel comfortable speaking (due to cultural dynamics, women might not feel comfortable or even be allowed to speak in the presence of men), neither are they conducive for discussing the minutiae necessary for effective service delivery.

People with disabilities may also be restricted from participating in *Barazas* on account of travel constraints if for example the venue is located far from their homes or if there is no attempt to make provision for access into the venue or for sign language interpreters.

Recognising the shortcomings of *Barazas*, ISER also holds focus group discussions among twelve to fifteen community members, sometimes with a duty bearer present to enable a more intimate discussion of barriers impeding certain groups, particularly vulnerable groups from enjoying the right to health. Such dialogues have been held for people who are hard of hearing, women, etc. These smaller dialogues complement the *Barazas* since they enable those who would not otherwise do so at a larger gathering to express themselves freely. As in the case of *Barazas*, ISER documents the issues raised in a report and where appropriate follows up by means of advocacy.

# AGHA's experience of implementing social accountability in health



**Dennis Odwee - AGHA Executive Director**

**T**he social accountability project of the Action Group for Health, Human Rights and HIV/AIDs (AGHA) aims to empower communities so that they are able to both demand health rights and monitor government programs in the health sector. The project, which has been ongoing since 2011, is targeted at vulnerable populations including the youth, elderly persons, people living with HIV, women and persons with disabilities (PWDs).

AGHA works in partnership with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to implement the social accountability project in the Ugandan districts of Lyantonde and Pallisa. In Lyantonde AGHA partners with RACOBAs- Rakai Community Based HIV Association and Child Aid; while in Pallisa District the organisation partners with Pallisa Civil Society Network and the National Association of Women Living with HIV/AIDs.

The key objectives of this project are: (i) to provide communities with targeted health rights education in order empower them to be able to demand accountability from duty bearers mandated to give practical expression to these health rights; and (ii) to empower community based structures so that they are able to monitor health service delivery and demand accountability for any shortcomings identified. The targeted community structures include; CBOs, VHTs and HUMCs, which are trained by AGHA on their roles and responsibilities, and how to undertake advocacy.

AGHA employs several strategies, which include but are not limited to the following: a scorecard system, a report card approach, budget analysis and public funds tracking tool. These are implemented at both the local level – i.e. sub county and district – as well as at national level. The issues that emerge from grassroots engagements are brought to the attention of the district or if appropriate forwarded to the different platforms



at the national level. At the national level, the Ministry of Health, Parliament, development partners and others are engaged. AGHA aims to ensure the accountable execution of duties and social responsiveness of health workers and other public duty bearers.

**AGHA has accomplished several achievements attributable to the social accountability work including the following:**

- There has been massive improvement in the relationship between health workers and patients. Before the interventions of AGHA, health workers were reported to be rude, aloof, unempathetic and indifferent to patients' needs. Health service users were in dire need of an intervention as they lacked an appropriate forum in which to raise questions or direct pertinent grievances. Prior to AGHA's intervention there was sustained tension between health workers and patients, with health workers' typically exuding an attitude of dominance over patients; whereas patients reported feeling exceedingly frustrated at having no answers to questions such as why health workers were absent, why there were drug stock-outs, or why there were fewer workers compared to other health centers and so on.
- The project has led to increased awareness among community members as to where and how to seek responses for such concerns; in addition to empowering communities, this has also engendered a greater sense of vigilance among communities. Invariably, this has had a positive impact, with rates of health workers absenteeism reported to have declined, which is attributed to health care user's



**Community engagement meeting in Pallisa district on score card to monitor health services**

increased reporting of concerns, such as for example absent health workers.

- This public scrutiny is not restricted to health care workers: citizens also monitor the formulation, implementation and progress of government programs development initiatives which has led to increased transparency and accountability.
- As a result of citizen demands for better services, several health centers have been able to prioritize the construction of staff housing. General health facility infrastructure has also been prioritized, prompting the allocation of funds for toilets and other health center essentials.
- In other cases, health centers have been able to install solar power, which has significantly improved the quality of service offerings – this positive impact is most keenly felt in maternal health services, where power outages previously required health practitioners to oversee deliveries in the dark.
- Many CBOs have been strengthened and encouraged to adopt social accountability mechanisms in their operations, which has strengthen citizen voices advocating for social accountability.
- On the strength of evidence-based research the project has appealed to duty bearers. AGHA is now considered an ally of government in accountability issues relating to the right to health.

However, notwithstanding these successes, the project has not been without challenges include:

- There have been reports of harassment by duty bearers who presumably feel threatened by the work of social accountability organizations. Some community members have been harassed for participating in social accountability processes, for example, a community monitor from Pallisa District was arrested for allegedly inciting other community members to violence. In other cases there has also been tension between empowered citizens and duty bearers on account of the latter being of the opinion that they are not answerable to citizens.
- When the project commenced, accessing information from district structures and general local government offices proved to be a significant challenge. Even although the Access to Information Act 2005 had been in existence for six years by the time the project started in 2011, many government officers were highly uncomfortable disclosing information to a non-state actor. AGHA had to be proactive by making and distributing to officials copies of the Access to Information Act 2005. The organization had to further conduct trainings on the implications of this law for Uganda as a whole before some officials could open up.
- It is also clear that while reporting is necessary for social accountability, sometimes it is an insufficient mechanism, which is where other strategies such as litigation may be needed. However, litigation is prohibitive for most Ugandan CSOs, which typically lack legal resources – both in terms of in-house legal expertise and in terms of finances to hire an external firm.
- Sometimes government does not yet fully appreciate the concept of social accountability and that many state functionaries do not understand the role CSOs play in facilitating citizen participation in this process. Unfortunately, there is still the misconception that CSOs are preoccupied with pushing the agenda of donor agencies and imposing upon the state a western ideology.

The absence of a network consisting of CSOs that work on social accountability issues has meant that the work of individual organizations tends to remain obscure. This is because laws such as the Public Order Management Act and NGO Act contain provisions that greatly restrict and even call for the closure of CSOs that are perceived to threaten the state – and organizations working individually on human rights-related issues tend to be viewed with suspicion by government. The establishment of a social accountability consortium would enable member organizations to harness their “strength in numbers”; and it would, more importantly, also ensure continuity in the event that one or more organizations come under government



scrutiny or were compelled to close.

### Way forward

The mass sensitization and empowerment of communities across the country should be prioritized in order to empower citizens to assert their rights and demand accountability where public officials fail to respect or violate the rights in question. Once empowered citizens have the capacity to hold accountable elected leaders since there exists a social contract between the two.

Consistency is very important if the targeted goals of social accountability are to be realised. CSOs, citizens and government should continually engage; and CSOs implementing social accountability should ensure that they are well versed with the laws and policies from which they derive their mandate.

It is preferable to engage in constructive as opposed to confrontational engagement, as the former tends to yield positive results while the latter is more likely to provoke government resulting in doors being closed to those attempting to engage the state.



**Before and after pictures of accommodation constructed for health workers as a result of social accountability work in Budaka District**

# Youth voices and participation through youth parliaments in Lira district, northern Uganda

**Morris Chris Ongom - Executive Director, GLOFORD Uganda**

According to the Uganda National Population Census of 2014, at least 78% of Uganda's population consists of youth. This youth bulge presents both positive and negative potentials, for which reason youth remain a critical development discussion at global, regional, national and local levels. To make a contribution to youth organizing, empowerment and leadership for development, GLOFORD Uganda designed and is implementing an innovative youth empowerment, social accountability and leadership mentorship model dubbed "Youth Parliament". This parliament recognises the critical role that youth can play in addressing youth and community challenges, particularly in collaboration with other actors.

Youth parliaments are constituted at sub-county levels and bring together youth-political leaders, entrepreneurs, Community Based Organisations (CBOs) leaders and other identified active youth within the community. An assembly of up to 100 young people is convened and oriented on the model; these youth have the latitude to debate the model and where necessary and appropriate to amend it to better meet their needs. At this same meeting, an election is conducted in order to appoint 25-30 members to the youth parliament. From this smaller cohort is elected a speaker, deputy speaker, clerk, as well as sub committees of education, health, children and youth affairs as agreed with the guidance of GLOFORD. After this process, capacity building areas are identified and undertaken in addition to mentorship before active engagements are embarking upon by the youth parliament.

In 2015, with Funding support from USAID's GAPP<sup>1</sup> program, GLOFORD started implementing this innovation in 2 sub counties and 4 divisions of Lira Municipality. Through the model, the capacity of youth leaders and entrepreneurs has been built. To date, youth participation in governance, leadership and development in targeted sub-counties of Lira have been enhanced. The project has continued to develop and nurture 6 youth parliaments spread across the 6 project locations as mentorship hubs for youths in governance, leadership, accountability and citizenship. GLOFORD is working with these youth in order to strengthen their democratic values through meaningful participation, personal (individual youth) initiatives, and social accountability movement led by young people. It is now evident in local leaders' responsiveness to youth issues at sub county, municipal and district levels, further reinforced by consensus dialogues and strategic engagements, that youth have been significantly empowered and prioritised within local government processes as a result of this initiative.

Although much has been achieved through the active participation of these young people, it is also common knowledge that working with youth is a complex undertaking. At the start of the project in 2015, youth mobilization was a huge challenge as youth were initially very suspicious. There were also several misconceptions, including assumptions that the project would provide handouts in the form of money, seed grants and so forth; however, we were consistent in our explanations to youth about the project objectives and model. A series of meetings and dialogues were also convened in an effort to address these misconceptions, which had the potential to compromise the project goals and social change envisioned. Ultimately, we challenged the youth to lead and strengthen the parliaments in order to amplify their voices on youth issues.

Over time, more youth expressed an appreciation for the youth parliaments, which they indicated were a very important youth forum. In quarter one of 2015, less than 30% of the targeted youth participated in

<sup>1</sup> United States Agency for International Development Governance, Accountability, Participation and Performance

community meetings organized by the parliaments. By end of 2015, youth parliament members were now in the lead in terms of organizing ad hoc community meetings, which were attended by leaders from sub county and division levels. The participation level by youth rose from approximately 30% to over 60% in different sub county activities specifically targeting young people. This was achieved as a result of increased awareness creation and working directly with youth leaders at all levels. Through business development mentorships, 39% of targeted youths are now engaged in urban and peri-urban businesses, with some having qualified to access Youth Livelihood Program funds from their sub counties/divisions.

GLOFORD, together with youth leaders, is working to ensure the realisation of the rights to education, health and an adequate standard of living, by strengthening governance, participation and linking the youth to health services at Health Centres (HC) IIs and IIIs, as well as monitoring and reporting on primary school performance and livelihood development opportunities in the 6 sub counties.

As a result the youth parliaments have expanded opportunities for youth and communities to access health services through community health camps and mobilization for health services at HCs. The relationship with HC staff have been strengthened and the youth are now working alongside HC staff to conduct health outreaches.



**Community health camp at Ongica parish-Lira sub county mobilized by the youth parliament and facilitated by Barapwo health centre staff**

The youth have engaged the HC staff and secured an allotted number of days within a week/month that are dedicated to the provision of youth-friendly services at the 6 HC IIIs in the project area. For instance, at Barapwo H/C III in Lira sub county Tuesdays and Wednesdays have been set aside for Anti-Retroviral Therapy clinic, and a Nursing Officer attached to serve young people. As a result, young people are accessing sexual reproductive health information, Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT), health tips and other personal issues affecting individual youth, which are prioritised by the Nursing Officer. All the HC IIIs in the other 5 sub counties have also allocated days within a week/month for young people. Through these initiatives at least 1,082 youths (743 females, 339 males) have accessed youth-friendly health services at different health Centre's and during community health camps recorded this year up to August 2016.



To strengthen education for the girl child, youth parliaments have actively engaged in monitoring and documenting relevant indicators such as the enrolment rate of girls at local schools, the pace and rates of progression through the education system, and any challenges affecting primary schools within these communities, which they report to the appropriate authorities. The youth parliament members were challenged to identify one primary school in their community, to conduct research on a pertinent issue confronting the school and to work with leaders on developing appropriate remedial action to address the identified challenge. The youth parliament in Barr identified Abunga Primary School. In Abunga primary school, the youth noted a high dropout rate of girls, including those already in primary seven. When they visited the school in June 2016, they found 16 girls in primary seven who had registered for UNEB. In September 2016, they went back to monitor the performance of the school and learned through interactions with pupils, teachers and the school administration that 6 primary school girls had left the school during this period. The youth, together with the school authorities, tracked down the girls and 3 (50%) resumed school and ultimately sat their exams.



**Lira sub county youth parliament in session at Albeko technical school**

Through youth parliament days conducted every quarter and biannually at every sub county and district level, young people have been able to engage political and technical leaders on youth issues. Issues and action points have been generated as a result, and the documentation used as a basis to follow-up on government commitments and track the progress of service delivery. The youth parliament as a social accountability mechanism has led to improvements in such things as for example health service delivery, specifically as regards sexual and reproductive health for the youth in the areas where the project is being implemented among others. GLOFORD will continue to refine this model through continuous learning and documentation of good practices.

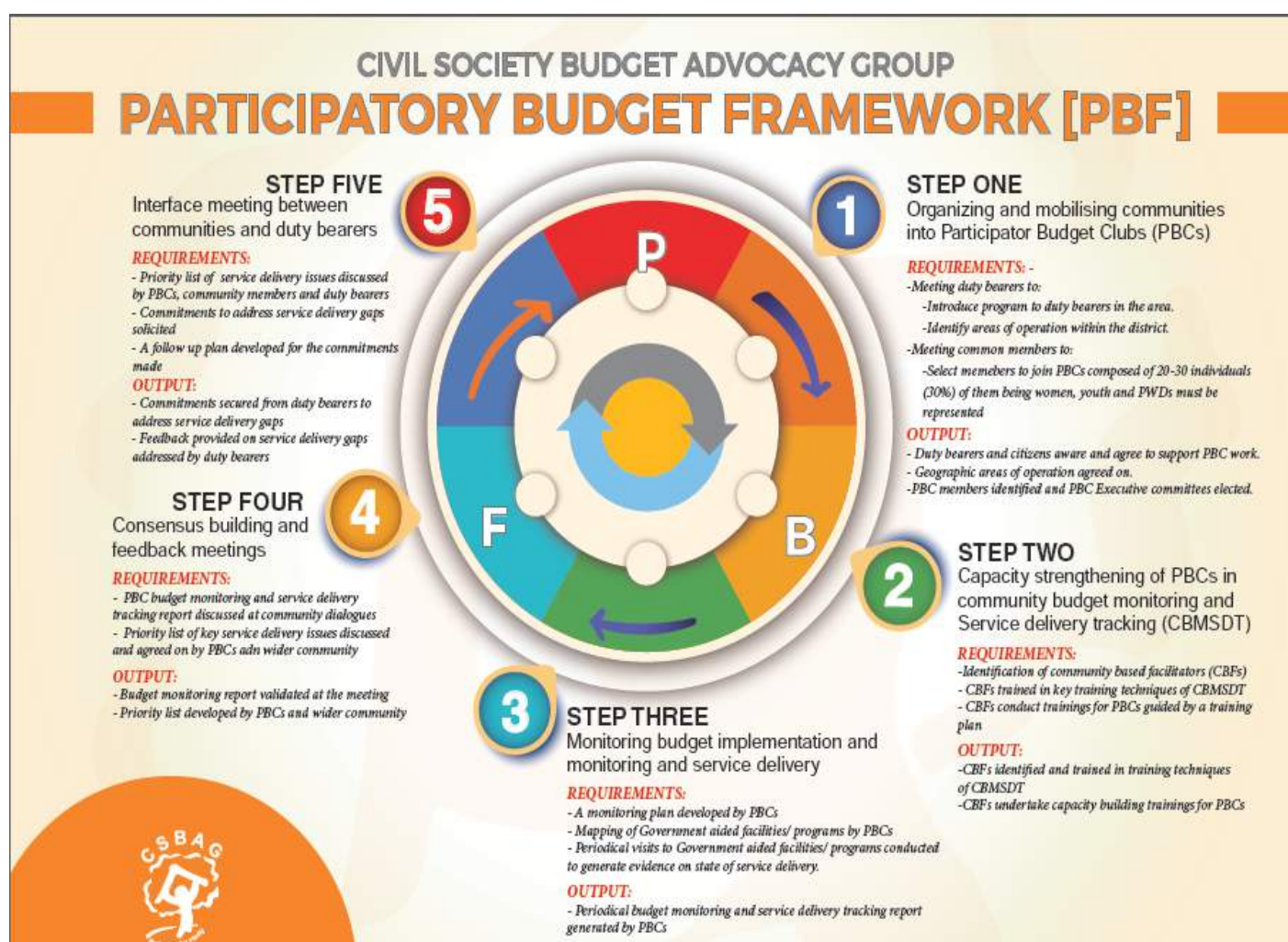
# Participatory budgeting impact on efficient and effective service delivery

## Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG)<sup>1</sup>

**P**articipatory budgeting envisions the inclusion of citizens in the budget process by among other things, identifying, interrogating, planning and monitoring budget spending and performance. Citizen participation enables citizens to demand from public officials accountability for government expenditure in order to make Government more responsive, effective, efficient – thereby improving transparency in terms of both the allocation and utilization of public resources and accountability in respect of the same.

Uganda's legal framework makes provision for citizen participation in the budget process. Objective X of the Constitution of Uganda asserts that "The State shall take all the necessary steps to involve the people in the formulation and implementation of development plans and programs which affect them". Additionally, Article 17(1)(i) states that "It is the duty of every citizen of Uganda to combat [the] corruption and misuse or wastage of public property."

## The current state of citizen participation in the budget process and challenges



<sup>1</sup> Civil Society Advocacy Group (CSBAG) is a coalition of CSOs that has since 2004 engaged in influencing the budget process to ensure that both the local and national budgets incorporate the views of the poor and that they are gender-sensitive.



The Government of Uganda has established an increasing number of platforms for citizen participation in the budget process including through inter alia: the co-option of CSOs onto various fora at both national and local levels, including District Technical Planning Committees, Sector Working Groups<sup>2</sup>, Steering Committees<sup>3</sup> and the like. In the 2015 Open Budget Survey<sup>4</sup>, Uganda scored 62% in terms of the indicator gauging the provision of substantial budget information to the public.

However, this does not imply that citizen participation in budget and accountability processes is without challenges. These include among others: (i) the exclusionary technical language of budget documents; (ii) a lack of requisite information and knowledge by citizens especially pertaining to plans and budgets by means of which to hold leaders accountable. A further challenge remains the limited opportunities for citizen to participate in the budget process, as illustrated by the poor score of 23% attained by the Government of Uganda in the abovementioned survey on the indicator gauging the state's provision to citizens of opportunities to engage in the budget process. Citizen apathy is another pressing challenge: citizens undermine the legitimacy of this process if they remain indifferent to Government efforts to facilitate their involvement in the budget process and perceive themselves as mere recipients of Government financing and planning efforts rather than as critical stakeholders in the process.

### **What has CSBAG done to address the challenges?**

Through its Participatory Budget framework, CSBAG has undertaken the mobilization of communities into budget accountability groups called Participatory Budget Clubs (PBCs), which are empowered to monitor service delivery. The empowerment of these groups is achieved by means of CSBAG-implemented capacity building trainings on Community Budget Monitoring and Service Delivery Tracking (CBMSDT) that impart skills in monitoring service delivery at community level. The findings of CBMSDT monitoring is compiled into a report, which is presented to communities and duty bearers for consensual identification of key action plans requiring remedial action by duty bearers.

The PBC framework is critical in promoting the empowerment of grassroots communities by providing them with a platform for civic engagement and capacitating them to more effectively assume their role within the budget process. Participatory Budgeting thus enhances accountability and transparency as a result of increased rights claims by citizens prompting increased Government responsiveness to people's needs. As Governments become more transparent and accountable, citizen trust in Government credibility and transparency also goes up, in turn fostering increased citizen confidence - and participation - in the budget process.

### **Achievements**

Increased platforms for CSO engagement in the budget process at local and national levels: through CSO and community advocacy, the Government of Uganda has incrementally provided more platforms for citizen participation in the budget process including inter alia: co-option of CSOs onto various fora including District Technical Planning Committees and Sector Committees at district level, as well as Sector Working Groups<sup>5</sup> and Steering Committees<sup>6</sup> at the national level. It is our contention that this is the reason Uganda scored 62% on the 2015 Open Budget Survey<sup>7</sup> specifically in relation to the provision of substantial budget information to the public.

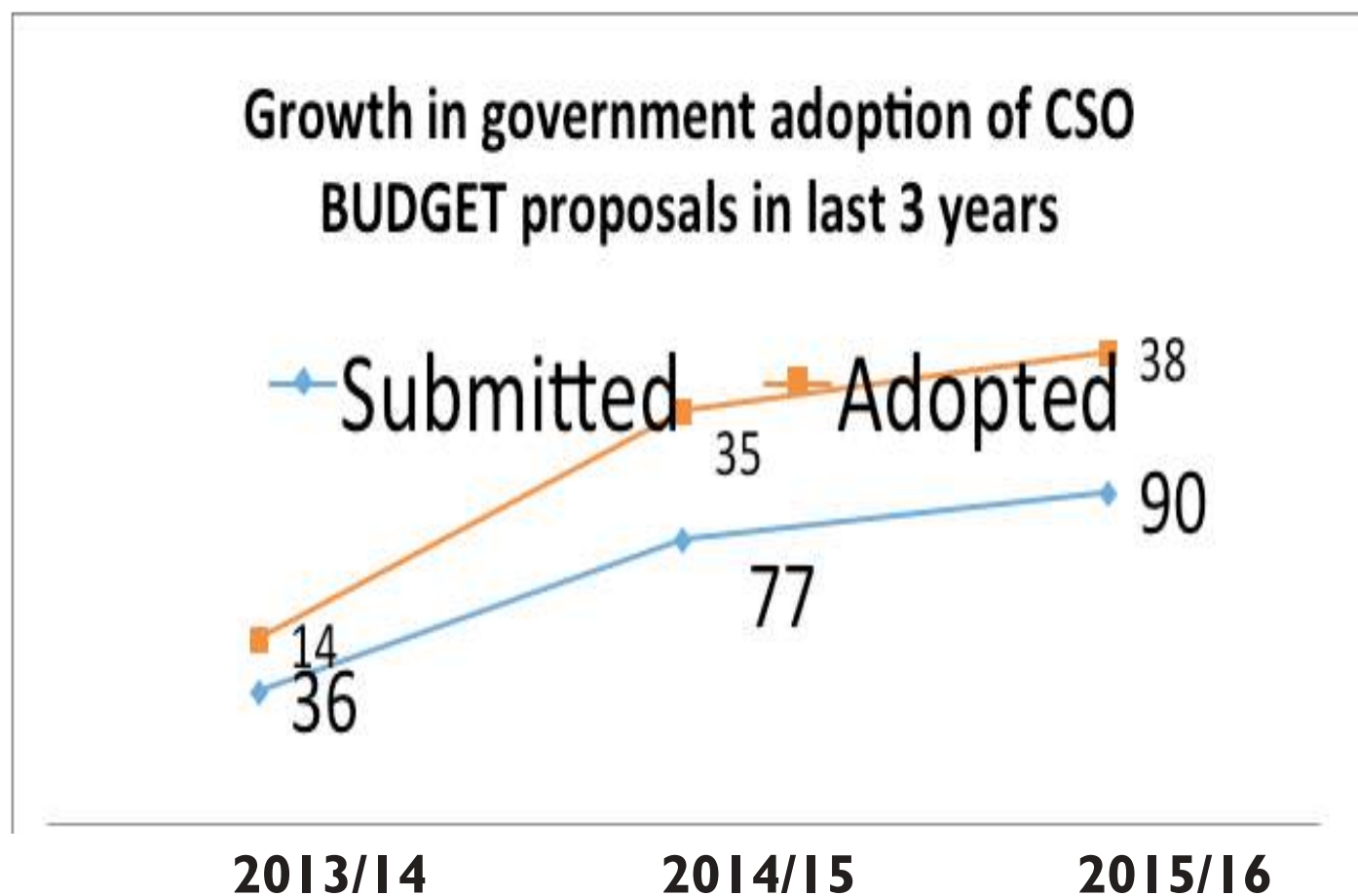
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2 Works and Transport, Justice Law and Order; Energy and Mineral Development and Accountability  
 3 Budget Monitoring and Accountability; Agricultural Financing Platform; and Open Budget Transparency Initiative  
 4 Open Budget Survey 2015, Uganda Debt Network and Budget Transparency Initiative  
 5 Works and Transport, Justice Law and Order; Energy and Mineral Development and Accountability  
 6 Budget Monitoring and Accountability; Agricultural Financing Platform; and Open Budget Transparency Initiative  
 7 Budget Monitoring and Accountability; Agricultural Financing Platform; and Open Budget Transparency Initiative

## Increasing uptake of CSO proposals

CSBAG, using its Thematic Working Group Approach, facilitates interaction between CSOs and Government technocrats and policy makers with a view to influencing the adoption of pro-poor and gender responsive policies.

Figure 2 below illustrates the growth in adoption of CSO Budget Proposals in the last 3 years



## Enhanced service delivery at Local Government level

Through increased CSO and community engagement with Government and participation in the budget process, CSBAG has also noted improved service delivery. For example, in Kibuku District, Kadama HC III, there was only one functioning pit latrine for patients and staff. However, following the establishment of Participatory Budget Clubs (PBCs), PBC-members engaged the district regarding this challenge, which saw the Kibuku District Local Government allocate UGX 15.2m for the pit latrine in FY 2014/15 (construction was completed in May 2015). In Agago District, Paimol Sub County, Paimol HC III had an incomplete maternity ward; when PBCs brought the matter to the attention of the sub county and district leadership, the maternity ward was constructed and handed over in 2015. In Agago District, PBCs discovered a collapsed pit latrine at Lira Kaket HC II that posed a sanitation and hygiene threat to the communities making use of the health centre. Due to PBC advocacy, the latrine was constructed in July 2015.



**Collapsed latrine 2014**



**New latrine 2015**

**Left:** The former CAO, Agago Okaka Geoffrey during the joint monitoring visit to Lira Kaket HC II in November 2014.

**Right:** The newly constructed pit latrine at the HC in July 2015| © CSBAG, 2015

# Access to information to improve social accountability

Charity Komujurizi - Programme Officer, Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC<sup>1</sup>)

Uganda adopted the Access to Information Act (ATIA) in 2005 to operationalize Article 41 of the Constitution, which provides that '[e]very citizen has a right of access to information in the possession of the State or any other organ of the State except where the release of the information is likely to interfere with the security of the State or the right to the privacy of any other person'.

Citizens' knowledge of what government is doing, as well as where, why and how public resources are allocated directly influences the extent to which duty bearers can be held accountable for their decisions and actions. Vices such as corruption, diversion, under or poor utilization of public resources thrive in environments characterized by a lack of transparency; such vices also negatively impact on officials' performance of public functions.

Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC), a Pan-African membership-based civil society organization and resource centre promoting the right of access to information in Africa, has since the year 2010 championed the adoption and implementation of access to information laws as a means to improve peoples' lives. One of its projects, *'Promoting good governance through citizens' access to information in Kigezi region'*, which was implemented in 2015 with the support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), contributed to citizens being able to hold public duty bearers accountable as a result of accessing information pertaining to service delivery in particular areas.

A case in point is Ndorwa Primary School where, in 2005, government facilitated the construction of four teachers' houses through the School Facilitation Grant so as to alleviate the shortage of teachers' houses at the school. While construction of the houses commenced in 2005, the teachers had still not taken occupation of the houses by September 2015. However, this changed after an information request regarding the contract for this project was filed.

"Kick Corruption out of Kigezi", one of the beneficiaries of AFIC's training on how to use ATIA, filed an information request to the Town Clerk of Kabale Municipality asking for records regarding the procurement, contract, payments and certificates of completion of this project. The request was granted and information obtained stating that the work had been completed; yet this was actually not the case. Upon inquiry, the Municipality took action against the contractor, compelling them to re-do areas where the work was found to be shoddy in addition to completing the whole structure.

A few weeks after completion, teachers were able to occupy the premises. It is hoped that teachers will have more substantive and productive contact time with pupils as a result of having shorter commutes to school, which will invariably contribute to improved academic performance of pupils, both girls and boys, at the school.

On 25<sup>th</sup> November 2015, another beneficiary of AFIC's training filed an information request to the National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC) seeking information regarding an unexplained shortage of water supply in Kabale Municipality. The requested information, which was provided within two weeks, attributed the water shortage to the irregular supply of electricity by Umeme. As a way of informing all the people affected by the water shortage, the requester of the information shared the information with a local radio station. In

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<sup>1</sup> AFIC is a Pan-African membership civil society organization and resource centre promoting the right of access to information, open government, open contracting and social accountability across Africa.

reaction to the airing of this information on radio, the managers of NWSC and Umeme arranged a meeting and agreed to coordinate load shedding and water supply schedules thus resolving the water supply problem in the Municipality.

These two cases are part of the many experiences highlighting how, by accessing information, communities have been able to hold public bodies accountable and directly change citizens' lives. We also observed how, in a number of instances, public agencies have reformed as a result of receiving information requests or training by AFIC. However, the biggest challenge thus far has been the lack of institutionalization and awareness of ATIA by public agencies and citizens respectively.



# The importance of bottom - up processes in social accountability: The case of *Ekimeeza*

Moses Talemwa - Journalist

In the run up to Uganda's 2001 general elections, a group of politicians and like-minded citizens coalesced around an afternoon drink at the old Club Obligatto in industrial Kampala to discuss the week's events. These meetings, which tended to occur on Saturday afternoons and were generally heated but 'ordinary' citizens tended to stay away as the debaters were mostly elites. Attendants of this particular meeting included then Kampala Municipality MP Francis Babu, his Soroti Municipality counterpart, Mike Mukula and their Kyamuswa (in Kalangala) counterpart Tim Lwanga. Others included old Budonians [old boys of King's College Budo] such as Aggrey Awori, Tom Gureme and Dr Edwadi Kayondo. It was Babu, who encouraged Radio One to cover the debates.

*"We thought that the debates were classy, and [provided] an interesting insight into the country's politics and would be a perfect avenue for the country to appreciate what was happening," Babu explains.*

Radio One first aired the debates, commonly referred to as *Ekimeeza*, in May 2001; (the debates featured on Saturdays from 2-5pm). The *Ekimeeza* was an outdoor event, providing members of the public with the opportunity to engage public officials and address political issues in a forum that came to be known as "the people's parliament". Soon radio Simba FM and CBS FM adopted the *Ekimeeza* and attracted a wider audience because they were conducted in one of the major local languages - *Luganda*.

Over time, Radio One's *Ekimeeza* took on a life of its own, with increasing numbers of people participating in the debates. The event was typically held in a bar, which proved to be good for Nile Breweries Ltd's business, motivating the company to assume sponsorship of the debate. Some of the topics discussed included issues such as the state of the economy, health care, education and infrastructure among others.

As the debates progressed, they became charged and government officials frequently found themselves on the defensive as locals railed against what they perceived as the state's lack of care for their wellbeing. Officials like Babu, Mukula and Lwanga often found themselves having to justify government action (or inaction) much to their discomfort.

A noteworthy fact to point out is that some of the ideas raised within these fora were actually adopted by the state. As Moses Nuwagaba, a former debater at the *Ekimeeza* recalls, *"We persuaded the state that it was too expensive to keep running after people to collect graduated tax, when the amounts collected did not amount to much."* Another participant, Fred Bamwine, recalls how the president exerted extensive pressure on the then Minister for Works, John Nasasira, after many debaters railed against the poor state of roads in the country at the time.

The debates are also notable for having groomed many government officials currently holding office.

*"The Ekimeeza is responsible for the likes of Minister Frank Tumwebaze, Resident District Commissioners (RDCs) Fred Bamwine, Kigozi Kaweesa and myself, as well as government spokespersons Ofwono Opondo and Shaban Bantariza, as well as Moses Byaruhanga of the President's office," recalls Nuwagaba.*

CBS FM's *Luganda* debates in particular raised the profiles of senior opposition politicians like Hon. Beti Kamywa (now Minister in Charge of Kampala), Hon. Betty Nambooze (Member of Parliament - Mukono Municipality), Hon. Moses Kasibante (Member of Parliament - Rubaga South, Omar Kalinge Nyago (Envoy)

and Hon. Erias Lukwago (Kampala Lord Mayor).

After the 2006 elections, these debates run into trouble when the President, who was tired of being vilified incessantly for the state's inadequacies, decided to ban these public media campaigns.

It took a lot of persuasion, most notably by the proprietors of these radio stations as well as some NRM insiders, to have them reinstated in mid-2006. The president was persuaded that the talk shows provided an avenue for the public to bring to government's attention those issues they believed required attention/resolution, which in turn would diminish the grounds on which the opposition challenged the state. The reinstatement of the debates was subject to several conditions imposed by the President:

*"There will be no alcohol served at such debates, so that whoever says anything can be held accountable for their statements," Museveni decreed.*

Radio One's *Ekimeeza* would remain at Club Obligatto; however, alcohol was not permitted to be served in the first two hours of the three-hour show. CBS and Simba FM moved their talk shows onto their own premises, where they were able to exert greater control over the events.

Despite these concessions, by 2009 all such public debates were completely banned. This has been attributed to the groundswell of public criticism expressed following a government decision to bar the *Kabaka* [King of Buganda] from traveling to the kingdom county of *Bugerere* in Kayunga district.

What is most unfortunate about the termination of the public debates is that the state no longer has direct and consistent insight into citizens' concerns. According to Nuwagaba, the talk shows provided a means of tapping into the mood in the country – albeit an admittedly imperfect but nevertheless effective gauge of public sentiment.

*"There was no way the state could correctly gauge the public mood on any major national issue. We knew that the president was following the public mood [when the talk shows were on air], but he often balanced that against intelligence reports. Now his other outlet was closed."* Nuwagaba explains.

The status quo prompted former Information Minister, James Nsaba Butuuro to come up with public debates called *Barazas* on state media, Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC), that the state could more effectively control. According to Nsaba Buturo, the *Barazas* would provide government with the opportunity to explain to the public what was happening in the nation.

*"The government was doing a lot of good things, but they were not getting good media play. The plan was to revamp the national broadcaster, UBC, and give it a lot of technical support so it could reach where the private FM stations could not reach,"* he explains.

Initially held at UBC's premises along Shimoni road in Kampala, the *Barazas* would also soon be held upcountry, and rebroadcast on the station.

However, despite massive financial and technical government support, UBC has not been able to gain traction over the privately run FM stations countrywide. Consequently, the *Barazas*, discuss critical issues such as the state of agriculture, health care, education, the economy and the like, still do not attract audiences as big as those that once tuned in to the likes of the *bimeeza* [plural for *Ekimeeza*].

*"At the height of the Ebimeezas, there were large numbers of [immediate] onlookers, as well as [remote]... audiences. Many times, the live talk show would end but the debate would continue for several hours off air at the venue."* Nuwagaba says.

He further concedes that the *Barazas* are far tamer in comparison to *Ebimeeza*, with the former also tending to restrict participation solely to state functionaries.

*“There is a feeling that if you criticize the state too much, you may not be allowed to discuss again ... or you could be intimidated by state operatives,” he adds.*

The producers of the *Barazas* are also significantly constrained: controlled largely by the Office on Patriotism in the President’s Office, the topics for the *Barazas* are subject to vetting weeks in advance and are not supposed to be amended or changed once approved. For instance, at the time of writing this piece, the Kasese crisis was a prominent feature in the news, which would likely have dominated debates on the *Ekimeeza* had they still been around. However, the *Baraza*, for that weekend discussed the President’s tour of an apple farm in Rukungiri district, placing significant emphasis on irrigation and other agriculture-related matters. The state may believe that it is accounting to the public; however, an equally important consideration is who is listening/watching/engaging with the state?

The *Ekimeeza* was more effective when it was formed organically by the citizens. The later *Baraza* [*Ekimeeza*] on state media imposed by the then Minister of Information and controlled by the state has not attracted mass citizen participation.



## **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.



**INITIATIVE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS**

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