Technical Brief

ENHANCING EDUCATION OUTCOMES THROUGH SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OF DUTY BEARERS BY COMMUNITY MEMBERS

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Introduction

Citizen Voice and Action (CVA) is one form of social accountability founded on the human rights-based approach to development. The World Bank (2004) defines social accountability as actions and mechanisms beyond voting that citizens can use to hold the state accountable and actions on government, civil society, media, and other societal actors promoting or facilitating these efforts. The Bank further argues that social accountability is essentially about government officials accounting for their actions to citizens.

World Vision Zambia implements Citizen Voice and Action to improve education service delivery in its programming. Citizen Voice and Action is a community-level social accountability model that allows for dialogue between communities and government, including all policymakers, to improve services in sectors like education, health care, water supply, sanitation, and livelihoods, which impact the lives of children, families and communities daily[1]. Since its inception, the CVA has been implemented in over 40 districts across all the ten provinces within World Vision Zambia's Programme Areas.

Technical Approaches

Sinazongwe and Katete districts are among the many other districts where World Vision Zambia has been implementing CVA in the education sector. As part of the CVA methodology, World Vision Zambia sensitized community accountability structures responsible for schools such as the Parents Teachers Associations (PTA), Ward Development Committees, Youth Associations and Traditional Councils on Zambian education service delivery standards and the citizen's policy entitlements. This led to community members knowing and realizing that it was the government's responsibility to ensure citizens accessed quality education. Communities and targeted social accountability structures were also equipped with a set of tools designed to empower them to engage in local level advocacy that would aid in identifying service gaps and promote dialogue that would enhance service provision. For example, communities were taught how to use 'monitoring standards' and 'scorecards'[2] to measure the extent to which services complied with the local policy requirements and satisfaction of service users with service delivery[3]. Action plans were also used to track the agreed-upon actions among stakeholders in the CVA interface meetings and progress towards service improvement. In addition, capacity was built among communities and social accountability structures on fundamental human and child rights and how these rights are expressed under the local law.

[1] World Vision's Citizen Voice and Action field guide

[2] A community-based monitoring tool that enables citizens to voice their assessment of a priority public service.

[3] Advocates guide for analyzing and utilizing citizen-generated data from Citizen Voice and Action (CVA)

After being trained on how to engage effectively to achieve intended results, local-level social accountability teams worked closely with the community and traditional leaders to mobilize the communities through meetings on policy sensitization and service delivery standards in education to contribute to public service delivery. During meetings, communities used the CVA model to voice their opinions about what makes a good school or any other government service in the school system. As a result, citizens generated indicators that described what constituted an excellent service in a school. After developing the indicators, they rated the performance of service by filling out scorecards to create performance measures in the education system among different groups (e.g., men, boys, women, girls, teachers, youth groups, persons living with disabilities, etc.)[4].

Text Box 1: CVA Technical Approaches

World Vision Zambia uses a number of approaches in its implementation of the CVA programme: The key approaches of the CVA programme are:

- Sensitisation of stakeholders on the education service delivery standards and the citizen's policy entitlements.
- Capacity to identify service delivery gaps and advocate for change.
- Capacity to engage and follow up on feedback.

Communities further worked collaboratively with government and service providers to compare the standards in schools against the government's commitments enshrined in the policy standards. These are existing standards, which are documented by government departments and are publicly available. Existing government standards are crucial for CVA and provide the critical distinction between traditional and CVA advocacy. Communities also had an opportunity to rate government performance against criteria and standard performance measures[5] that they generated.

Outcomes of the Programme

The CVA programme has enhanced advocacy, participation, deliberation and interaction between service providers (usually government line ministries, parliamentarians and other stakeholders such as private companies) and service users (citizens). Consequently, there is enhanced joint action planning and addressing gaps to improve education outcomes between state and non-state actors. The programme has also enhanced the application of education best practices in the two districts because of exchange visits that the programme facilitated.

The enhanced engagement and advocacy capacity among communities led to the construction of school infrastructures such as early childhood education centres and classroom blocks at the secondary school level. Further, citizen engagement with duty bearers resulted in the construction of learning facilities such as science laboratories. In addition, two teachers' houses were built at Sinazongwe Primary and Secondary schools. Additionally, the trained Community Working Groups (CWGs) contributed to the government providing new desks and rehabilitating damaged ones, increasing sitting space for learners. The programme also contributed to the procurement of 300 learner textbooks in different subjects. Furthermore, in addition to facilitating the re-entry of girls' into schools, the CVA Community Working Group members facilitated learners enrolment and retention. The programme has also increased children's representation in decision making regarding the governance of the schools through the school councils. Therefore, school authorities hear and address issues affecting learners, such as insufficient water and sanitation facilities, lack of or inadequate teaching and learning materials, short staffing, and teacher absenteeism. The following case study is one good example of how the social accountability programme contributed to achieving some of the outcomes.

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[4] Group-generated performance measures are those suggested by the group filling out the scorecards, and therefore can be different by audience, though the groups are accessing the same services at the same time.

[5] Standard performance measures, are a list of similar rating descriptions measured across all groups, facilities being evaluated.

Case Study: Leading Change through Social Accountability in Vulamukoko Community in Katete District of Eastern Zambia

Vulamukoko Primary School in Katete District was built in 1942. However, until 2019, it only had Grades one to seven. Being the only school for the 13 villages surrounding it meant that learners transitioning to grades beyond Grade 7 had to go away from their villages to other districts for education. This served as an obstacle in furthering children's education, especially for girls. As a result, communities engaged the government to upgrade Vulamukoko Primary School to a Secondary School to increase access to education for children in the community and protect girls from the risk of falling pregnant.

After jointly monitoring service delivery standards, the CVA committee of Vulamukoko called for an information dissemination meeting with local stakeholders within Vulamukoko Ward that prioritized the construction of a 1 × 3 classroom block. Together with the district local authorities, Vulamukoko Primary School applied for Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and received funding in 2014 amounting to $4375 (K70,000). These funds only assisted in initiating the foundation of the project, but they remained inadequate. In 2018, World Vision supported the community to hold a CVA meeting that enlightened the community leaders on their rights and responsibilities. This capacity led to forming an action group that mobilized $6250 (K100,000) from the Constituency Development Fund.

Further, the community was mobilized by the CVA Working Group, and each of the 13 villages contributed cement that facilitated the moulding of 4,150 blocks. Other community members contributed labour and delivered stones and sand. At the same time, their area Member of Parliament provided transport to ferry materials for the school project all because of the CVA engagement. Therefore, in May 2019, a 1×3 classroom was completed and used to accommodate Grades 8 and 9. In addition, the District Education Board Office was engaged and asked to deliver learning materials and desks at the school. After completing the new block, the school introduced a double stream at Grades 8 and 9. As a result, children from the community schools do not have to worry about limited school places at their local school. Moreover, they have reduced distance to other schools away from their community where they had to rent accommodation. The school also recorded a higher number of girls in Junior Secondary School than boys. In May 2019, the number of girls in Grades 8 and 9 was at 176 and 132, compared to the number of boys at 158 and 120, during the same year, respectively.

Challenges and gaps

Despite the positive outcomes that the CVA has achieved, the programme has also suffered some challenges affecting the programme's effective implementation and sustainable impact. The key challenges and gaps include:

- Advocacy and engagement for better education standards are mainly directed to school authorities and district education and political leaders. However, due to high staff mobility and transfers, progress made is often affected by a new person who first has to appreciate the problems being presented by communities and get used to being held accountable by community members and their authorities.
- Citizen-generated data through monitoring standards and community scorecards are not incorporated in the district and national development plans. Hence, government structures make plans that do not address existing challenges identified by citizens on matters that affect their daily lives.

Opportunities

While the programme has challenges and gaps that need to be addressed to improve programming and contribute to sustainable impact, opportunities are there that can be leveraged:

- The buy-in of the government to support the CVA programme provides a sustainable path to development. Therefore, citizen-generated data from monitoring standards and school scorecards can enhance education service delivery if shared and incorporated in development plans.
- CVA programmes have been mainstreamed in other sectors such as WASH, Child Protection, Health, and Livelihood. Therefore, scaling up CVA programmes can be easily achieved once citizens are empowered to engage decision-makers at district and national levels.

Our Call for Action

The outcomes, challenges and opportunities of this programme present an opportunity for programme strategy adjustment or strengthening. Therefore, the following actions by different players can help enhance social accountability in the education sector:

Policy Makers

- Ensure community-identified problems and challenges through monitoring standards and community scorecards are incorporated in the district, provincial and national education development plans.

Partners

- Mainstream social accountability or CVA programmes to support citizen engagement with their duty bearers on issues affecting them.
- Support district, provincial and national duty bearers to incorporate the constructive concerns into the education development plans.

Program Implementers

- Leverage the government's buy-in of the social accountability programme to advocate for the incorporation of identified education concerns in development plans.
- Ensure new duty bearers at school, district, provincial and national levels are engaged and well-oriented of the CVA programme to warrant buy-in and sustainability of the programme.

References

World Bank. (2004) "World Development Report 2004: Making Services Work for Poor People," Washington, DC: World

World Vision International (2021). Advocates guide for analyzing and utilizing citizen-generated data from Citizen Voice and Action (CVA). January 2021