MuniSAM
Municipal Social Accountability Monitoring Program

Main Lessons Learned

Since February 2012, Concern Universal Mozambique, in collaboration with civil society organizations (CSOs) and with funding from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has been implementing **"Municipal Social Accountability Monitoring Program - (MuniSAM)"**. The main objective of MuniSAM is to "Improve the quality of life of citizens in selected municipalities through enhanced social accountability and responsiveness to social needs of public resource management processes". The MuniSAM is implemented in 6 (six) municipalities of Northern and Central Mozambique: Cuamba, Metangula, Montepuez, Mocimboa da Praia, Mocuba and Quelimane. At the core of the MuniSAM's approach is the progressive satisfaction of human needs through available resources. MuniSAM fosters continuous, constructive and systematic interaction between all key stakeholders in target municipalities and promotes simple and comprehensive tools that municipal actors are able to implement and sustain and that can serve as a reference in the wider municipal context.

Three (3) years of implementation of MuniSAM Program created a good base for learning that could be useful for existing and new social accountability practitioners. We can mention some learning generated by the Program:

1

It is important to understand that social accountability initiatives are not a set of linear, technical, predictable activities, but rather **complex, systematic and systemic interventions** that are as much about building relationships - based on creating trust between actors and causing changes in ways of thinking and attitudes, as are about developing capacities of stakeholders to use technical mechanisms and tools (such as social accountability monitoring, social audits, public hearings etc.).

2

In the heart of the social accountability approach should be a **constructive, results and solutions orientated dialogue** - in that line it is important to enable citizens not only to monitor the governmental performance but also to develop a realistic understanding of the challenges and constraints faced by government. Thus the actors engaged in monitoring of governmental activities (citizens, civic, groups) should be able not only to analyse the performance of municipal managers but also to offer suggestions to help Government to adequately respond to community needs.

3

Besides demand and supply side actors, it is **necessary to involve other critical players in social accountability interventions** especially in terms of influencing changes in legislation. Those are the oversight institutions such as the National Assembly - Parliament, Administrative Court and other public integrity departments.

4

It is crucial for social accountability interventions not to focus just on easiest to reach and the most cost effective groups but rather to design explicit strategies ensuring the **equitable and effective inclusion** of the hardest to reach: poor people, women, youth, persons with disability, people living with HIV and other marginalized groups.

5

It is important to take into consideration local knowledge levels and gaps and **incorporate comprehensive and continuous actions** of capacity building, technical assistance and follow up strategy into social accountability interventions. It is necessary to ensure the consolidation of learning/knowledge about the concept and social accountability practices in order for it to persist after the end of lifetime of specific projects.

6

Alignment with the legal framework and institutional policies and procedures is essential for the implementation of social accountability programs. It this regard, it is important that all stakeholders are aware of policies, legislation and procedures so that the alignment of the initiative with the legal framework can be easily operationalized.

7

The innovative nature of this kind of programs requires an element of **flexibility in the design of the activities and budgets** in order to increase the ability to react to context changes and lessons learned throughout the process. Moreover, staff commitment, dedication and "know-how" are important ingredients in the recipe of Social Accountability. It is mandatory to ensure that there is a budget to constantly improve and update the staff skills.

8

We can't bring long lasting changes by working alone. **Coalition and alliance-building** is an important component of a successful intervention, especially in terms of influence of issues of more systemic nature such as legislative changes. In this sense, it is essential that social accountability initiatives seek strategicalliances and coalitions for greater sharing of knowledge,experiences, lessons learned and strategies applied to overcome the challenges encountered.

9

It is important to understand that the implementation of social accountability programs needs to apply a **systematic approach** to ensure that the implementation phases of "pre-engagement, engagement and follow-up", are systematically operationalized in order to effectively bring the desired results.

10

Social accountability initiatives should provide evidence which will act as incentives for both citizens and the government. It is important for both sides to see concrete benefit and value of its use. Citizens can see significant gains through improvement of service delivery. Service providers and public officials can find incentives in increased tax base and improved legitimacy. In that sense it is important to identify role models - **Champions** - Government officials who understand and support social accountability initiatives and are in position to influence their peers so that they can adopt a receptive attitude towards initiatives of this kind.

11

It is important to link the citizen's rights with their responsibilities in the social accountability interventions. This allows public authorities to look at the initiatives of social accountability in a more partnership perspective and opens the channels for engagement. On the other hand, the **interconnection of rights and** responsibilities provides a greater understanding and ownership of the civic' participation culture as the citizennot only has the right to demand better services but also has a duty to pay taxes, which in turn should contribute for the provision of better and more services by the government.

12

Implementation of social accountability projects depends on context. Local context varies and these specificities must be taken into account in the implementation. Specific differences may depend for example on levels of knowledge and literacy, organization and capacity of the civil society to interact with the local Government, political influence and tensions, the openness of local government among others. Therefore monitoring of the real time context is crucial for the success of governance programs. The tools that work well in one context not necessarily will work in the different context or time, even within the same geographical region and thus must be continuously revised and adopted.