

## Self-Assessment Workshop

October 27-28, 2006  
Accra, Ghana

## WORKSHOP REPORT

### **Background**

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Community monitoring is an important method of ensuring social and public accountability in governments. The global commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and their translation into Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), is one of the major public policy initiatives in Africa. Parliaments are all about representing people and making their voices heard before, during and after public policy measures, such as PRSPs, are formulated and implemented. Moreover, Parliamentary Committees have a unique function in translating public sentiment into advice for policy improvements.

During 2004-2006, the Parliamentary Centre, with funding through the Canada Fund for Africa administered by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and in partnership with the Institute for Policy Alternatives (IPA) in Benin and Ghana, administered an extensive training program for MPs, parliamentary staff, and CSO representatives on community monitoring tools. Upon completion, participants then took the community monitoring tools and knowledge they had learned and applied them to pilot projects in each of their countries. These pilot projects took place throughout 2004, 2005 and 2006. The pilots offered an opportunity for members of parliament, parliamentary staff, and CSOs to discover how effective a government-funded project was for a given community. The use of citizen report cards and community score cards allowed researcher teams to uncover how communities viewed aid effectiveness. By recording the voice of the community and later returning to their parliament to disseminate these perspectives, community members, CSOs and parliamentarians joined together in holding their government accountable for aid.

### **Workshop Objectives**

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On October 27 and 28, 2006, those who had participated in community monitoring training as well as completed a pilot project in their respective countries gathered together at the Golden Tulip Hotel in Accra, Ghana to assess the training and pilot projects. The

Self-Assessment workshop was a chance for MPs, parliamentary staff, and CSOs who had participated in the training and pilot projects, to evaluate that training and the effectiveness of the pilot projects. In addition, participants mapped out possible ways forward for continuing community monitoring. The forum focused particular attention on substantive issues of poverty reduction that the pilot projects have examined; methodologies that were adopted in carrying out these pilot initiatives and the unique experiences of each country; how the results of the pilot initiatives could be shared and disseminated.

The main objectives of the workshop were:

- To review the key conclusions drawn from the field work undertaken by the various parliaments in the area of monitoring and evaluation of poverty
- To review the implications of these conclusions for relationship building between parliaments and civil society as well as for increasing parliamentary control over policies and governmental programs to do with poverty alleviation.
- To evaluate how participatory methodologies may benefit parliamentary research.
- To outline a way forward in Parliamentary capacity building.
- To outline strengths and weaknesses of the pilot project program and to raise the problems and questions that are evident before it becomes too late to fix them.
- To clarify the needs that are requiring specific interventions.
- To bring together information that will be useful for planning and decision-making in each country.
- To furnish the PC and other interested groups (our governments, development partners) with examples of the success of the APRN.
- To collect the necessary information for elaborating a document of synthesis on how parliaments can influence strategies of poverty reduction according to oversight of poverty reduction.

## **Day 1: Friday, October 27, 2006**

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### **Opening Remarks and Plenary**

In her opening remarks Valerie Stam, Program Officer with the Parliamentary Centre, extended a warm welcome to all present and recalled the importance of community monitoring tools for public and social accountability.

One of the trainers from IPA, Mr. Issifu Lampo, then led participants in sharing their expectations and fears for the workshop. General expectations centered on:

- understanding best practices and country experiences in providing oversight and monitoring the outcomes of PRSPs
- increasing the capacity of parliamentarians in their role of oversight
- learning how parliaments will deal with the turnover of MPs after elections
- learning how parliaments have managed cooperation between CSOs and parliaments and parliament and government

- defining a clear link and institutional framework between the parliamentary committee work and civil society work to fight endemic poverty in Africa
- finding a way forward for the pilot projects
- obtaining ideas on where they went wrong or how they could perfect pilot projects
- strengthening the network that is slowly building up
- learning some French (or English) to share between different languages
- obtaining more funding for the community monitoring program through CIDA and the Parliamentary Centre

Several fears regarding the workshop were highlighted:

- a lack of funding for continuing the community monitoring project
- not be able to find ways of using tools to effectively do oversight
- running out of time in the workshop and for the pilot project, thus abandoning the community monitoring project

A short overview of the training and pilot project program was given by Dr. Paul Ouedraogo, another trainer with IPA who underscored the importance of having a participative, interactive workshop. Concerning aid effectiveness, African parliaments are becoming more and more important. Therefore, it is crucial to establish relationships with CSOs, donors, and parliaments. The community monitoring training undertaken by the Parliamentary Center and delivered by IPA is one method of facilitating a working relationship between MPs, parliamentary staff, and CSOs. The training for MPs lasted six (6) days and covered questions of social and public accountability, MDGs, PRSPs, monitoring and evaluations, and objectives of development plans. The MPs spent two (2) days on the ground learning participatory community monitoring techniques. The training for parliamentary staff and CSO representatives lasted six (6) weeks and taught monitoring and evaluation techniques, and discussed strategies and policies for poverty reduction. The parliamentary staff and CSOs spent two (2) weeks on the ground with a local NGO learning participatory community monitoring techniques.

### **Presentations by Country**

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Each country gave a brief presentation outlining the background and activities of their pilot project and their findings and recommendations. The presentations were followed by a question and answer period. Participants found many commonalities regarding the situations in their respective countries. Particularly regarding HIV-AIDS, it was noted that the circumstances in different African countries dealing with HIV-AIDS are quite similar, thus lessons learned, failures, and best practices were useful for everyone regardless of context. Often participants shared best practices regarding the different themes of the pilot projects, for example, on girlchild education, literacy, HIV-AIDS, and micro-credit.

## **GHANA**

In Ghana, 35% of the population is poor, defined by the World Bank as those living below the poverty line. However, poverty is localized in Ghana as 7 out of 10 people are poor in the northern regions. Those hardest hit by poverty are usually women and children. Capitation Grants, given out by the District Assembly, provide free education to every school child at the primary level. There is no specific allocation of funding for girlchild education in Ghana in the National Budget. However, there are government-owned projects to ensure enrolment of girls in school and NGOs have a number of projects on girlchild education. Plan Ghana claims to provide 100 schools in the pilot project district and supports girlchild education by feeding girls while they are in school and providing a school uniform. The pilot project in Ghana aimed to assess the effect of both the government's and two NGO's girl-child education programs on poverty reduction as a whole.

MPs and staff participated in training with IPA on the community scorecard, which was the method used in the field to collect data. Parliamentarians went to the field themselves to conduct the monitoring and research exercise and it was an opportunity for them to reach out to the people directly. There were 3 main sources of contact: civil society groups (Plan Ghana and World Vision), district government representatives, and citizens.

The community scorecard enabled community members to look at what was the benefit of a given program and then to give out a grade. Communities scored the District Assembly at 80% in terms of service provision of the Capitation Grants. They were generally satisfied with the services provided from the Assembly. School enrolment was at 50% before the Capitation Grant. The present enrolment with the capitation grant is now at 80%. However, aside from Capitation Grants they scored the Assembly very low - between 30 and 40%, given the widespread poverty in the region. Despite the grant, some community members still felt that they could not afford to send their children to school. Some costs were identified; for example, the uniform of their wards, the cost of food, and payment of exam fees which is almost equal to school fees. Community members scored Plan Ghana at 90%.

For the MPs, the training resulted in added knowledge and understanding of the monitoring exercise. The use of the scorecard allowed them to have a direct interaction with the community and to understand poverty. MPs hope to have a meeting with the Executive in order to ensure some follow up to this monitoring exercise. One recommendation is to build the monitoring process into PRSPs in the future; also dialogue between community members and service providers should be promoted. A specific recommendation of the report is that there should be a distinct effort at promoting girlchild education by specifically allocating resources in the budget and promoting a policy to support girlchild education.

## **SENEGAL**

The pilot project in Senegal evaluated a literacy class in a suburb of Dakar - Sangalkam. Senegal has a national program of literacy that takes into consideration both the French language and local languages. There is a Minister of Literacy in Local languages and there

are programs linked to literacy where NGOs and local base communities intervene. However, literacy teachers are not paid well. Senegal has a number of programs looking at literacy and women. Female teachers are regrouped in an association which has the objective, complete with a quota, of enrolling more girls in school.

This pilot project was taken as a test project. Community monitoring tools were discussed during 2 working sessions of the commission for the first conception. Once the tools of community scorecards, citizen report cards and focus group discussions were adopted by the National Assembly, a program on the ground was elaborated.

The pilot project resulted in a wide dissemination of community monitoring tools and the adaptation of these tools to a local context (i.e. Sangalkam). Moreover, a positive relationship developed between Parliament and civil society, and between parliamentarians themselves, as they began to work together more. Parliamentarians have begun to take an interest in knowing the progress of projects they fund once they realized that they could efficiently verify their decision to support a given project. Parliamentarians and staff have developed an automatic reflex of analysis according to how beneficiaries appreciate the work done. In addition, female parliamentarians took a particular interest in monitoring and evaluation and parliamentarians now want to start using the Gender Budget Analysis tool when analysing the budget.

## **KENYA**

In Kenya, the pilot project monitored the impact of HIV-AIDS initiatives run by the government. The prevalence rate of HIV-AIDS in Kenya is officially 5% but this is questionable because in certain spots in Kenya it is at 30%. The pilot project looked at awareness of HIV-AIDS and tuberculosis, counselling and testing, ARVs, prevention of mother to child transmission. There was a team of 3 researchers - 1 from the CSO community, and 2 parliamentary researchers. The community score card, citizen report card and interface between community and service providers were the community monitoring tools used.

The pilot project demonstrated that most Kenyans are aware of HIV-AIDS but this has no effect on behavioural change and stigma reduction. Awareness is at 90% but this is not reflected in attitude and behaviour which means there are other socio-cultural issues that need to be addressed also. This demonstrates a gap in policy, perhaps demonstrating that the emphasis is placed on the wrong area. Many areas for policy improvement were suggested. For example, one of the findings of the research team is that HIV-AIDS prevalence rates are based on how many people are going for testing; however only sick people go for testing so the policy does not reflect reality.

The pilot project addressed the lack of access to objective information on policy projects for parliamentarians. This type of research may lead to more freedom of information. Also, it was noted that this was the first time ordinary people were being asked for their view on government program and services in Kenya. In addition, the collaboration between CSOs and parliament during the pilot was a new and exciting venture that should be formalized and capitalized upon. One shortcoming was the fact that the pilot project

created an enormous expectation on the part of the communities that participated in the research. This needs to be addressed.

## **MALI**

The pilot project in Mali looked at social integration of HIV-AIDS victims in the town of Ségou. In Mali, 2% of the population is living with HIV-AIDS. In Ségou, all infected people get together to cook. This facilitated the distribution of the questionnaire and allowed the research team to get responses from many people. The pilot demonstrated that people affected by HIV-AIDS had accepted their disease but had not accepted the fact that they were marginalized in society. They wanted to be accepted because they were brave enough to take the test and come out as someone infected with HIV-AIDS.

The community monitoring training allowed the researchers to come into the community without raising suspicion. Budget analysis also became easier because it was easy to see how the money should be distributed.

One result of the pilot project is the good working relationship between CSOs and parliament. Before, parliament thought that CSOs were coming to replace them, but now they see that their role is to monitor.

A practical outcome of the pilot project is that women suffering from HIV-AIDS were able to present their needs to MPs. The MPs have agreed to look at how NGOs in Ségou could address these needs with support from the national budget for HIV-AIDS. To do this, the NGO will change their status to an association of public utility, which in turn obliges the government to give them funding.

## **ZIMBABWE**

In Zimbabwe, the government has a policy of giving free ARVs to those infected with HIV-AIDS. The objectives of the pilot project were to monitor ARV treatment for differences in access between men and women. Also, the efficiency of the ARV roll-out in targeting the most vulnerable was also analyzed by targeting research groups of the most vulnerable. The Women and Aids Support Network (WASN) and the Public Accounts Committee spearheaded the pilot project in a constituency in the North. In the context of the MDGs, the goal was to hold the government accountable to the agreements that they had signed on to with the MDGs.

The citizen report card and focus group discussions were used. An assessment of the results was carried out in 6 days. Enumerators were taken from a support group of people living with HIV-AIDS. They were trained for 3 days prior to the pilot project.

It became apparent that the ARVs were not actually free because there were costs of up to 20-30\$ recognized by the population. The researchers discovered that people felt that the process to get onto the ARVs was too long, so it was inhibiting access to services. Access to treatment was also linked to transportation; ARVs are not accessible everywhere so they become cost prohibitive even though the actual cost of ARVs is relatively affordable.

Community members suggested financial assistance and provision of food as a way to address the limitations of the program and access to ARVs. It was also determined that care of children was an area in treatment that was not being adequately taken care of and this was something that was raised on the floor of Parliament.

## **UGANDA**

Uganda's pilot project took place in the Lira district that has suffered from the war with the Lord's Resistance Army. The team of researchers went to 6 camps where the people do not have work, food, or proper accommodation. 180 questionnaires were distributed in 6 communities. In the camps, 98% of people were affected (not infected) by AIDS, meaning that many people have had knowledge of someone who was/is affected. This made the issue a relevant one. Morals have gone down in the camps and women are particularly vulnerable. The researchers found that the issue of stigma was not so pronounced because so many people were affected by the HIV-AIDS crisis. Awareness of HIV-AIDS is very high, but there is a problem with actual change in behaviour.

One result of the pilot project was that local people became willing to participate in the accountability process as they developed a sense of entitlement to the promises made by the government. The pilot project also had a lot of positive un-intended results: Children in the camps do not go to school because they have to pay a small fee of \$4 per month. This issue was uncovered by the pilot project and also presented to the Minister of Education and on the floor of the house. The report has been disseminated to the stakeholders and they are taking action. Moreover, area MPs were very interested in the project and attended the dissemination workshop. Now they are taking some action, though it is inadequate.

It is felt that the accountability process in Uganda is normally a top to bottom approach. Performance or service delivery is never measured, just finances. Moreover, PRSPs are very technical. They are done by the Ministry of Finance and Parliament does not have a lot of input. The MDGs do not provide exact solutions for the problems that they raise; they need to be broken down for in-country use.

## **ZAMBIA**

Zambia chose to monitor the government's Food Security Program for their pilot project. The overall objective of the FSP is to improve food security and crop output through crop diversification, conservation farming, market development, and livelihood intervention.

Target groups of the FSP program are vulnerable but viable farming families, female and child-headed households, among others. Social and demographic factors have shown that women are more vulnerable, therefore the program tends to target more women than men. Men tend to have alternatives to other businesses and access to land. Moreover, a larger portion of the community benefits when women benefit from the FAP because women tend to support more people. In all 72 districts of Zambia the government is using CSOs to implement the FAP. The objectives of the pilot project were to monitor the impact of FSP on people's lives, to assess the participation and perceptions of the FSP, and to provide data for feedback.

The government plans that after 2 years the people will be able to take care of themselves but it does not work that way for a variety of reasons. The people argue that the government does not take into consideration the socio-economic factors that affect their household. The late delivery of inputs is also a problem with this program because it only rains once per year. If one misses the planting season, a family will depend only on maize for food for a whole year.

The drop-out rate of the FSP is due to the budgetary allocation and levels of funding per budget year. The funding has been consistently reducing at the national level. This is not a relief program - it is a loan scheme. Participants get a seed pack and once they plant and harvest there is a certain amount they have to pay back. The terms are quite soft. They pay less than the value of the loan, and they also may pay back in kind.

In general the CSOs were not reliable. The initial CSO officer who had been trained left the job. To avoid this problem, there needs to be an institutionalized agreement between parliament and CSOs so that both parties will work.

## **BENIN**

The pilot project in Benin focused on water retention in the constituency of Nikki. An evaluation form was distributed to beneficiaries and NGOs and the citizen report card was also used.

The Parliament of Benin was supposed to contribute 3,000\$ USD to the project. However, once they gave out the money, the government was no longer interested in the follow-up. This is true for many projects funded by the government.

One difficulty was that the population thought that the research team came with a lot of money to distribute. Another difficulty was timing. This project was supposed to be operational from August 2004. There were presidential elections. It finally was done in July.

## **NIGER**

In Niger, 3 out of 4 poor people are women. Micro-credit cooperation with women was chosen to illustrate the benefits of community monitoring. The pilot project reinforced the capacity of parliamentarians and civil society in community monitoring. First, the members of the network on poverty reduction were trained in community monitoring. Three groups were created during the pilot project each composed of one parliamentarian, one staff and one CSO member. One MP came along who was not a member of the pilot project but who came from the region.

It was found that the micro-credit program was pertinent and efficient and viable. The women have reimbursed their interest and credit at almost 100%. However, not a single woman was able to reinvest after the program was over. Therefore the impact was negligible. At the individual level, micro-credit does not change anything about life conditions. The women have said that the program is efficient, pertinent and valuable but it

does not have an impact on them. Nevertheless this program has raised the consciousness of women by helping them believe in themselves.

At the parliamentary level, the research team hopes to lobby the bank to have a line of credit where it is not necessary to have a guarantor. One benefit of the pilot project is that Parliament appreciates this new openness towards civil society.

## **Day 2: Saturday, October 28, 2006**

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### **Focus Group Discussions**

After the recap of lessons learned, participants broke up into three (3) focus groups to discuss the following thematic areas:

- Training in Community Monitoring
- Pilot Projects, and
- Community Monitoring tools.

The results of the focus group discussions are presented in Table 1 found in the Appendix. However, a summary of the recommendations and lessons learned are presented below.

### **Lessons Learned**

Several lessons learned were pulled out from the country-based presentations and subsequent discussion as well as the focus group discussions.

One benefit of the pilot projects is that it breaks down the barriers that exist between parliaments and CSOs and succeeds in developing trust between the two. However, there should be formalized relationships between parliaments and CSOs to clarify roles and responsibilities as there is often a contestation between the executive and civil society in emerging democracies.

Another benefit is that this type of program in community monitoring addresses the lack of strong research offices in African parliaments.

Furthermore, expectations and hopes are raised in the community when a questionnaire is administered or when parliamentarians come to visit. However, with community monitoring researchers do not come to deliver services but to assess how services are currently being delivered and to inform policy. This creates disappointment on the part of communities which needs to be addressed. Somehow community monitoring research needs to inform policy as well as ensure the delivery of services. Researchers also realized that visiting local communities fostered trust.

## Recommendations

In general, it was agreed that the pilot project program in community monitoring was a timely initiative and one that should continue.

Some of the benefits that parliaments derived from the community monitoring pilot project are:

- tools with which to support the articulation of a pro-poor budget.
- a reason for parliamentarians to better fulfill their responsibilities in terms of oversight and accountability
- an increase in trust between communities and parliamentarians
- an openness towards future cooperation with CSOs

In addition, it was recommended that the APRN be kept and that a federation of country-specific networks be created. In order to institutionalize these country-based networks, internally, parliamentarians should lobby for financial assistance of network activities via commissions or other structures adapted to the needs of parliament. Participants wish to create links with other programs as well.

Also, the community monitoring training should be replicated at the sub-regional and regional levels, as well as taught in schools and universities. The training should be made available in published form. Likewise, the training for MPs should be more policy-oriented so that it is immediately useful to their work. The training program should be expanded to include the training of trainers. It should also be localized so that there will be more follow-up with trainees. Finally, there should be an alumni database so that participants can keep in touch as well as keep up-to-date with new methods and best practices.

Reporting was seen as a lacuna both in the training sessions and regarding the pilot projects. For the training sessions, not enough time was given to reporting methods in order to know how to package the results of the pilot. For the pilot projects it was felt that not enough time was given for writing reports.

Regarding institutional memory, it was felt that more training should be given to parliamentary staff to maintain continuity of parliamentary activities. The turnover of MPs can often hamper activities, as was the case with several pilot projects. By training staff, knowledge from different parliamentary sessions will not be lost. One suggestion in combating the loss of institutional memory is to train more parliamentary staff in community monitoring tools as well as other areas so that they can then train new MPs. Perhaps networks of parliamentary staff could also be created. In addition, MPs who do not get re-elected but have received community monitoring training could be asked to work with the pilot project team on subsequent research projects, thus imparting their knowledge to a new cohort of individuals.

Moreover, the pilot project is not very representative of the state of affairs of a certain issue in a given country. In order to give any recommendations to governments, these pilot projects need to be done with wider samples all over the country to get a broad idea of what is happening on the ground. The project themes themselves should be diversified.

Moreover, parliamentarians should ensure follow-up on the national level by promoting relevant policies on the issue covered by a community monitoring project.

For the pilot projects, it was requested that they continue. However, one caution is that community monitoring raises the expectations of communities that services will be subsequently delivered. It would be good to link up with UNDP, USAID, or UNICEF, for example, to work on more projects and to possibly work on delivering services to communities. The project themes themselves should be diversified. Moreover, parliamentarians should ensure that relevant policies on the national level follow-up whatever community monitoring project has occurred.

### **List of Appendices**

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Appendix 1: List of Participants

Appendix 2: Program

Appendix 3: Focus Group Discussions

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Ottawa, Canada, December 5, 2006