

Pan African Social Accountability — learning lab 2016

Pan African Social Accountability Learning Lab 2016:

A joint conference hosted by the Public Service Accountability Monitor and World Vision.

17 – 21 October 2016, Manzini, Swaziland.

Conference Report

“How does context affect social accountability outcomes?”



Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Acronyms	3
1. Background	4
1.1 Swaziland Context:	5
2. Conference Objectives	5
3. Conference Participants	7
4. Report Structure	7
5. The Importance of Context	8
5.1 Is Social accountability workable in the African context?	8
5.2 The Southern African Context:	12
5.3 The East African Context:	18
5.4 Research, methods and context:	23
6. The role of key stakeholders	27
6.1 Understanding the perspective of government as a stakeholder in social accountability	27
6.2 Understanding the perspective of the media as a stakeholder in social accountability	30
6.3 Swazi students challenge African nations to embrace accountability	35
7. The Importance of Learning	36
7.1 How do you define learning?	36
7.2 How do we learn as individuals and organizations?	37
7.3 What prevents us from learning as individuals and organizations?	38
8. The Way Forward	39
8.1 How will you turn practical lessons from PASA into strategic thinking and action within your organization?	39
8.2 How can we continue to share with each other and continue to learn from each other?	40

Acknowledgements

PSAM acknowledges, with gratitude, the support of the following funders and organisations:



Acronyms

ACA – Alliance for community Action
AG – Auditor General
CBO – Community Based Organisation
CS – Civil Society
CSC – Community Score cards
CSO – Civil Society Organisations
CSPR – Civil Society for Poverty Reduction
CVA – Citizens Voices in Action
EU – European Union
MP – Members of Parliament
MuniSAM – Municipal Social Accountability Monitoring Program
OVC – Orphaned and Vulnerable Children
PASA – Pan African Social Accountability
PS – Permanent Secretary
PSAM – Public Service Accountability Monitor
PTA – Parent Teacher Association
SA – Social Accountability
SAI – Social Accountability Initiatives
SAMComs – Municipal Social Accountability Monitoring Committees
SDG – Sustainable Development Goals
SID – Society for international Development

1. Background

The Public Service Accountability Monitor has made it an organizational objective to host a conference for social accountability practitioners, researchers, academics, and other stakeholders on a biennial basis. In light of having attended the 2014 PSAM conference, the Regional Social Accountability and Learning Coordinator of the World Vision Southern Africa Regional Office, Moses Ngulube, approached PSAM's Advocacy Impact Programme (which is tasked with organizing the conference) to co-host the 2016 conference. Based on shared conference objectives, and the need to foster and facilitate conversations across the region, PSAM agreed to co-host the 2016 conference with World Vision. The conference was marketed as a Learning Lab. Throughout this report the word "conference" and "learning lab" are used interchangeably.

The conference theme: 'How does context affect social accountability outcomes?' responds to current trends emphasising the need to ensure that social accountability initiatives are context responsive, and designed to ensure that organisations are context sensitive in the work that they do. Furthermore, the theme aimed to provide a space for participants to interrogate the specific contextual elements which constrain and enable them to achieve their social accountability outcomes. There is acknowledgement that in order to undertake social accountability initiatives it is important to understand both the macro and micro factors which will impact on the outcomes of those initiatives. Various tools are available to aid in unpacking those factors at both the macro and micro levels, such as political economy analysis at the macro level and randomized controlled trials at the micro levels. The challenge, however, is that very often these cannot be generalized beyond a specific context. As such, it becomes difficult to share concrete, transferable lessons about what works in one context and why, with the aim of replicating results in another context. The conference aimed to provide a space for delegates to unpack some of the complexities about context and to examine the elements of social accountability which are transferable across context, and those which are truly context specific.

What emerged from the conference was an acknowledgement that not only does context matter and will impact on the implementation and outcomes of social accountability initiatives, but that context will also determine the way in which practitioners think about the very concept of social accountability itself. The varied and diverse understandings of social accountability by delegates illustrated that, depending on their context and the constraints under which they worked, they were able to practice social accountability in particular ways which may have been different in another context. This, among many others, were some of the lessons learnt at the learning lab.

This report outlines some of the interactions and discussions which emerged from the conference, and aims to summarise the key lessons shared, learnt, and questioned by delegates during the five-day conference. This was addressed through a programme which included field visits to World Vision Swaziland initiatives, keynote addresses, and also through panel discussions which related specifically to the way in which social accountability was being practiced across Southern and East Africa by invited practitioners. The learning lab delegates had the opportunity to seriously interrogate their own social accountability approaches and those of others in the pursuit of enhanced, robust and context-calibrated social accountability initiatives.

1.1 Swaziland Context

The decision to hold the conference in Manzini, Swaziland was based on the acceptance by World Vision Swaziland to host the conference. World Vision Swaziland had more recently introduced World Vision's approach to social accountability (Citizen Voice & Action) to the country. Over and above this, the theme of the event lent itself to the unique Swaziland context as many delegates questioned the relationship between civil society, government and international organisations in social accountability within the so-called 'monarchical democracy'. The unique Swaziland socio-economic and political landscape allowed participants the opportunity to reflect on their own contexts and to compare the way in which social accountability is not only implemented in the Swaziland context, but also how it is understood in varied contexts.

Swaziland seems to be a country of vast contradictions. It is a nation of strong ties to tradition and a nationalistic identity, but is also strongly influenced by Western modern trends, "rural homesteads of stray huts next to shopping malls, or loincloth and axes next to suits. Swaziland is formed of one tribe and thereby not divided between different tribes. A sovereign and conservative monarch controls the country, but civil society groups and especially the labour unions are active in a battle for democracy"¹. It was this dichotomy between western ideologies and traditional monarchy that provided delegates with the opportunity to reflect on their own practices and the importance of context in understanding and implementing social accountability. As delegates came face to face with social accountability projects being implemented in Swaziland through the field visits, they were able to reflect on the similarities and differences of the challenges in this context with those in their own contexts. They were better able to interrogate whether there are any avenues for better understanding their contexts and what could work in different communities.

Of particular interest to the work of participatory governance and social accountability is the political system within Swaziland. The Tinkhundla political system is a traditional council system instituted in 1978 by then Swazi King Sobhuza II. The Swaziland Constitution recognizes the Tinkhundla system as a democratic and participatory system that is underpinned by the devolution of state power from the central government to the Tinkhundla at community level. The different tinkhundlas (traditional councils) form a link between communities and government. The tinkhundlas are led by the Bucopho (tinkundla committees) which consist of persons elected from the polling divisions within an inkhundla (a traditional constituency).² The unique Swaziland governance structure made it an interesting place for practitioners to compare and interrogate various methods of implementing social accountability.

2. Conference Objectives

The Advocacy Impact Programme at PSAM has broad objectives which it aims to achieve in hosting a biennial conference:

- Provide a space for in-depth debate amongst practitioners, academics and donors involved in social accountability initiatives across sub-Saharan Africa;
- Generate debate amongst practitioners in order to foster a culture of learning and reflection on their work, and in doing so improve the work that they do within the social accountability field;

¹ Pejstrup, S.C.L. 2011. Swaziland in Transition. The Interdisciplinary Journal of International Studies, Vol 7 (1): 15-26.

² For more information and reflection on the impact of the political system in Swaziland on social accountability see the December 2016 PSAM Newsletter (www.psam.org.za/news.htm)

- Facilitate the presentation of research which highlights the challenges and successes of social accountability practitioners, programmes, conceptual frameworks and projects in order to generate a pool of knowledge from which participants can learn and can be used to assist participants to stay relevant and informed;
- Encourage interaction amongst practitioners from across sub-Saharan Africa in order to strengthen their partnerships across the region;
- Encourage social accountability practitioners in the region to use the conference activities and approaches as a way of increasing organizational effectiveness and developing organizational capacity;
- Provide a space for PSAM staff and projects to share their knowledge, experience and expertise in the areas they work in.

The objectives of this conference with its particular theme and structure were as follows:

- Present and interrogate recent research on how contextual factors foster and/or inhibit social accountability programming and impact thereof;
- Share practical field experiences on how contexts in different countries have shaped funding modalities, designs, implementation, results and evaluation of social accountability initiatives;
 - a. This also includes scrutinizing how different organisations, in varied contexts, are innovatively 'vertically integrating' their social accountability programmes;
 - b. Questioning how social accountability is being used to galvanise collective action for domestication, resourcing, implementation and monitoring of the Post-2015 development agenda;
- Collectively explore how funders, practitioners, state actors and researchers can better tailor social accountability interventions to dynamic socio-economic and political ecosystems.

3. Conference Programme

The conference programme provided participants with a range of different opportunities for engaging with current debates, experiences and trends within the social accountability field. It also provided participants with the opportunity to engage with each other in a range of different settings with the aim of furthering the value of the PASA experience. Some of the programme included traditional panel discussions where invited delegates were able to present their experiences and research on particular topics which related to the conference theme, allowing participants the opportunity to hear about SA work in different contexts, and ask questions from panelists about issues which were pertinent. In addition, participants spent almost two days of the five-day conference on field visits to social accountability sites where World Vision are engaging with communities mostly within the bounds of their Citizen Voice & Action (CVA) projects. These field visits to schools and clinics brought conference participants into contact with not only CVA project members, but also community groups, traditional governance structures, government officials and beneficiaries. The informal learning session provided participants the opportunity to discuss issues around learning in a less structured, but perhaps more creative way using small break away or buzz groups to share experiences and debate pertinent issues. Another key event during the learning lab was the afternoon dedicated to the Knowledge Marketplace or Gallery Walk. The Knowledge Marketplace provided participants the opportunity to showcase the work of their organisations, and allowed participants to mingle, ask questions, take away publications of interest, and generally engage with each other and the work that each participant is doing in their context.

4. Conference Participants

The Learning Lab was attended by social accountability practitioners, strategists, activists, researchers, government officials, and donors from over 15 countries from within and outside Africa to collectively discuss the way in which social accountability is practiced in different contexts. Delegates represented organisations from a spectrum of sectors including community-based organisations, national and international NGOs, academic institutions, think tanks, international donors, government departments and ministries, and civil society cooperatives.



5. Report Structure

The report that follows draws out the main themes that emerged in the interactions over the five-day conference. It weaves together narratives of the conference as well as direct quotes to provide an overview of discussions and points of emphasis. At times it follows the structure of the conference programme, but it is largely structured around key themes that emerged during the conference:

1. **The importance of context:** how does social accountability work depend on context, what makes one context different to another, and what factors enable or hinder social accountability in specific contexts?
The report reflects on the different contexts represented at the conference which emerged during the panel discussions.
2. **The role of key stakeholders:** how can civil society organisations work with other key stakeholders such as government, the media, and each other to ensure effective social accountability initiatives?
The report reflects on panel discussions from different stakeholders, drawing on the experiences of those in specific sectors to better understand the role of stakeholders in different contexts in social accountability work.
3. **The importance of learning:** how are different practitioners and researchers thinking about learning in relation to their social accountability work? How are we sharing our lessons as social accountability practitioners, and how can we continue to share lessons and experiences in a way that fosters learning?
The conference hosted an informal learning session where participants were invited to share and reflect on different learning practices and experiences.

4. **The way forward:** How can we continue to share our experiences, lessons and innovations in implementing social accountability in our contexts with each other on a continuous basis without having to wait for the next Learning Lab or meeting?

6. The Importance of Context

The discussion which follows results from the following panel discussions held during the conference:

- Keynote panel which asked presenters to answer the important question of whether social accountability is a useful and workable agenda in the African context. This question was addressed by representatives from an international donor, regional CSO and international CSO.
- The Southern African context and social accountability. Panelists were asked to answer the following questions in their presentations: what is and isn't doable, what opportunities are there for innovation, and what methods do governments use to avoid accountability in your context? The case of Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Mozambique.
- The East African context and social accountability. Panelists were asked to answer the following questions in their presentations: what is and isn't doable, what opportunities are there for innovation, and what methods do governments use to avoid accountability in your context? The case of Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya and East African generally.
- Cutting-edge research. This panel provided an opportunity for social accountability research to be shared with participants and focused on research methods within particular contexts.

This section of the report provides verbatim presentations from panelists and in some cases interaction between the panelists and delegates asking specific questions during the plenary. While the panelists were asked to answer those questions listed above, some may have provided more general and others more detailed responses. The value in providing a verbatim account of the presentations is that it allows the reader to 'hear' the voices of the delegates and their stories in their own words.

5.1 Is social accountability workable in the African context?

Perspectives from international donors - presented by Filip De Loof, Programme Manager at the EU Delegation to the Kingdom of Swaziland

I will try to introduce and shed some light on one of the social accountability initiatives, the Community Score Card which is done by the EU. So we're funding an action which is an interaction with communities and health facilities to implement Community Score Cards. I will spend a few minutes to look at the potential for participatory government, and try to explain how the context is influencing this social accountability and civic engagement, and I will try to identify some elements of success of this action. In practical terms, the main implementer is World Vision Swaziland, who is also using a lot of staff, more than a hundred community mobilisers from local community based organizations. They are the main actors and they got some technical assistance, some technical support from a number of agencies, some that are experienced with the community score card and is helping them with the implementation aspects of methodology. The aim of the community score card approach is to improve the access of local communities to basic services and in this case we have chosen basic health, health service delivery from the clinics and social cash transfers which is a cash transfer for OVCs (orphans and vulnerable children). They are working in 24 communities, centered

around 8 clinics, working in communities with an estimated seventy-six thousand people. The community score card is a participatory methodology, where they try to use constructive dialogue and bring the service providers together with the communities to discuss issues, problems and then select priorities and with the community to set up an immediate action and then monitor the improvements and measure the improvements of satisfaction. This whole methodology is closely monitored, and everything is documented and then at the end of the programme this methodology will be evaluated itself and whether it is useful and whether it works in Swaziland. And if it is found to be positive and most people are satisfied, then this methodology could be expanded to all the geographical areas and to other sectors such as the irrigation, agriculture, inclusive governance, and in fact any other sector.

Logistically it is quite an important and elaborate methodology. Communities are engaged by inviting people, and I'm happy to say that the majority of them would be women who would show up, about 150 per community for half a day, and then they are split into different focus groups to have focus group discussions. So there are about a dozen groups who sit together to have a discussion with the community, very professionally lead by the community mobilisers, who will stimulate the discussion, trying to identify issues, and make priorities of what is the most urgent needs in the healthcare and the cash transfers for OVCs. They do the same exercise with the providers. That means with the clinics, with the staff they discuss issues, challenges and opportunities. Same thing with people involved in the cash transfer that will be MTN, who is doing the mobile cash, the cash point, and cash providers, and people in the community who have been involved in targeting OVCs.

The most important and delicate thing to do is to bring these two groups together - representatives of the community and representatives of the service providers, and then again in a non-confrontational way, discuss the priorities which have been identified and come up with an action plan.

One question I want to look at is how does the context of Swaziland make this community scorecard, the social accountability exercise, possible? There are many stimulating aspects in the context. One is of course needs, there are huge needs in the communities to access basic services. Although the country is a middle income country, once you go to the rural communities there are issues of access to basic services, and it is important that people acknowledge that and service providers acknowledge that. Many leaders in governance, whether in modern parliamentary ministerial regional services as well as traditional governance, including Chiefs, everyone has heard about the criticism of top down governance and everyone has heard that it is the source of the gap in services, so they are willing to reverse that to undergo an exercise of bottom up planning and governance. So in summary, there is acknowledged need of service provision and all stakeholders are very willing to participate in this community scorecard.

Perspectives from regional CSOs - presented by Jay Kruuse, Director of the Public Service Accountability Monitor, South Africa.

Your comment about whether social accountability is just a buzz word struck a chord with me because in the early 2000s it certainly was a buzz word. It was met with a lot of skepticism internationally. We've gotten over that hurdle, despite difficult contexts. The intentions of this work remains bold, they remain global and

they are bigger than the people who start them. I think that's one of the new frontiers - we have a lot of veterans in the rooms who have a lot of passion, but we know in our countries there are a lot of passionate youngsters out there who want direction and want opportunity.

The [social accountability] work attracts people who are passionate about their country, their people, their rights. We're also passionate about solving complex problems, problems that have endured, some would say for too long.

We seeing a lot of trends in countries, not just in Africa, across the world. I think that's an indication that the work in the sector is maturing, we are reaching a tipping point. Yes, in some countries it may result in violence, may result in civil war, but it may not. It needs people like those in this room. In terms of managing the scale and whether it is sustainable: the important factors to build scale are that you need diverse skills, but you [also] do need collaboration. Sometimes the collaboration will be critical, but the emphasis should be on constructive criticism. It's not 'us and them', it's 'we'. We need to find the solution.

It needs to be understood that it is a medium to long term endeavor, there are low hanging fruit, but you've got to have stamina and you've got to spread the load and you've got to build a network.

So the emphasis there is on sharing, supporting, enabling and understanding that we are in it together.

And we need to confront the problems, and we need to find the solutions together. Another emphasis is that it requires constant reflexive and adaptive strategies and learning at desk level, at organizational and network level. The new frontier which needs attention are [firstly] community radio as a vehicle. [Secondly], I think social media has depths that we need to spend time investing there. And [finally], then regional and international campaigns, we need to commit to giving time to those campaigns to support initiatives.



Panelists on the Keynote Panel: Filip De Loof (Programme Manager at the EU delegate to the Kingdom of Swaziland, Rudo Kwaramba (Regional Leader for World Vision Southern Africa), and Jay Kruise (PSAM Director)

Perspectives from international CSOs - presented by Rudo Kwaramba, Regional Leader for Southern Africa World Vision

I think one of the things we have as civil society is short term perspectives, and if we genuinely believe that it's important for people to understand how they are governed and the systems that exist for their governance, give them an understanding that you do hold the power but you hold it at particular points to

use it effectively. For me, when I look back to a time like 2000 there was the referendum, the work that happened through civil society to reorient people around how different mechanisms hold together: what is the relationship of the Constitution to the different layers of government; what's my relationship with my government; Where do I get an opportunity to have a say; and what is my right to choose a person on the basis of what they have to offer?

I think we could invest much more in creating citizens. You know people who are fully citizens. So you have a birth certificate, you have a passport, you have the right to vote, but if those processes are incomplete, citizens don't realize the point at which they intersect with the system and the point at which they can use their rights. Unfortunately, in a lot of these countries this space for civic education on the basics of 'who am I', what does it mean to become eighteen, what does it mean to have a right to vote on what base should I vote [doesn't exist].

If we had people to really demand to people standing for office: [to say] give us a clear one pager of what you would do in education, what you would do in health, what you would do in agriculture, we could use those opportune moments when they come up to create a different dynamic that will come into place immediately after an election, and then continue through the next election.

But unfortunately our governments know the power that is in an empowered citizen, and as we as NGOs think we can replace government and step into service delivery ourselves. I think we can actually interrupt the democratic process. Sometimes I think we need to limit ourselves to just these frameworks that give more information, information to the citizen, information to the one who is in power. If we could just use more information to create a restlessness.

I think we need to create restlessness in our societies by just using information better, amalgamating it, and putting it out there, people will not sleep.

Those who are holding office will know they got gaps in their own system, they will stop sleeping. They will wake up tomorrow and they will act differently. But we need space for that information to go out to both the citizen and the one who's governing. That's why I think someone talked about community radio. The only way people were getting information was through community radio.

So I think we need to do more to just use information to create a momentum that in itself creates a call for different ways of working.

5.2 The Southern African Context:

The case of Swaziland – Presented by Sakhile Dlamini Malaza, World Vision Swaziland

In Swaziland what we do is we implement CVA [Citizen Voice in Action] in our area programmes and they are mostly focused on education and health.

What works: Our strategy that we have used successfully is to partner with government to achieve the objectives of CVA in Swaziland and we have realized a lot of benefits from that. One of them being the partnerships that we have with government. In the schools, we had some improvements to the school infrastructure to create an environment that is safe for the children.

What doesn't work: What isn't doable for us is going alone, we've realized that we cannot go alone as an organization, we need the government partnership for our programmes to be sustainable.

There are more opportunities as our government begins to embrace the concepts of CVA. One example is the Community Score Cards [CSC], which is supported by the EU and the Ministry of Health, and we are seeing a lot of improvements as a result of the programme and we know that as the government adopts the initiatives (the CVAs and CSC), they will be able to improve on them and achieve what they have promised the citizens.

Contextual dynamics: I think for us one of the advantages is that in recent years there have been a number of policies and legislation that government have come up with including that children have a safe environment and one of those has created an opportunity for us.

[There has been] government openness to civil society participating in policy development and implementation so that has helped us in driving our CVA programme.

We have a free society. And working together with government has not been a problem for us. Initially we did encounter those problems about understanding social accountability itself and its purpose. It helped us to align it with what government was proposing in education. In health, it is more complex area. I don't think there has been any kind of political tools that have been used against social accountability, it is a partnership in work for us.



The case of Zimbabwe – Presented by Thembile Pute, PACT Zimbabwe

Our programme focus has been around managing democracy and governance projects which are on civil society strengthening, so we work with civil society. Currently we working on civic engagement, where we are supporting community based organisations [CBOs] to provide capacity to communities to be able to put to task the solution holders, or have interface meetings with solution holders, where communities are able to identify the issues in their communities and prioritize issues, then have dialogue meetings with solution holders. And this could be their councilor, the MP, the ministries at the local level, for them to get answers about whatever is happening at the local level and get solutions.

They [communities] come up with action plans, which they are able to monitor. So what the CBOs will assist is to help the communities to come up with structures on the ground that promote sustainability. These structures will be action committees, advocacy committees which will eventually be the ones to mobilise communities around certain activities and issue. These committees have been trained to sit at council level to engage with council, to be the people steering the project at community level. What we have done is partner with PSAM, they have provided training to our partners so they come up with their own tools.

So we took the PSAM tool and synthesized it to the local level so that it suits their communities and they using the tool at community level. We have seen a lot of results using this approach in that we have given a voice to communities, communities are voicing, they are bringing issues forward and these people are feeling accountable.

I can give you an example of one of the partners: at some point there was a school that was supposed to be electrified, but it had been five years and nothing had happened. The community had raised this issue at this meeting asking what happened to the money because when you look at the budget and you look at the reports, there was money for this. And the MP was in this meeting and took the issue to Parliament and tabled the issue at Parliament and two months down the line the school was electrified. So we are seeing results in a small way and noticing that at community level, communities know what they need and now they can engage the solution holders to get solutions.

There are quite a number of social accountability issues such as rights to health and education, and rights to water. Also looking at the context in Zimbabwe, we have high levels corruption, there is abuse of office and a culture of not being accountable, and also high levels of polarization around ethnic and political lines. We also have a system of patronage, where people are appointed to positions not to be accountable to citizens but to please the person who has put them in that position. We also have legislation which infringes on the rights to access to information and association, which affects the CBOs and CSOs work at community level: how they can get information? It also limits the information you can get from public officials so even basic information that you are supposed to get, they withhold that information. So it has made it very difficult to get information, such as a budgets or strategic plans from a local authority. But we have a few organisations who have managed to develop that relationship at community level and are getting those reports. There is one in particular who has set up 40 information kiosks which has information about local authorities such as budgets, audit reports, council meetings, everything is now accessible to the community and then the community groups are able to unpack and share with the community there.

What is not doable: you cannot do social accountability on national resources, it is a no-go area dealing in diamonds or gold. And then one of the things also as civil society is we have not marketed the social accountability framework to the supply side. So you find that you have empowered the communities but when they interact with the solution holders they are not clear, and it is not a culture for them to explain why the money went this direction. You can see even at national level the kind of corruption that is happening.

Instruments which make it difficult for communities: in Zimbabwe we have a progressive Constitution which provides for social accountability monitoring to happen. But what happens is that we were supposed to align the laws so that they are in line with the Constitution. So what the government has done is to slow down the process of realignment of the laws. This is one of the things they are doing to slow down the process. Because this new Constitution gives power to Parliament to supervise the institutions, all the government institutions and all those are supposed to be accountable to Parliament and they supposed to demand reports from all those departments and to ask questions about expenditure but that is not happening because the laws which are supposed to be in use are not in use.

The case of Zambia – Presented by Tommy Singongi, Civil Society for Poverty Reduction

52 years after independence we still have 54% poverty, 40% extreme poverty, we still have high levels of corruption. The Auditor General released his report last week and, as is the case every year, there are millions of Kwacha being misused, and as usual we are not seeing the level of accountability that we would expect in terms of how we account for public resources. If we look at national budgeting: from 2012 – 2015 the national budget has doubled. And as you may know, the doubling in resource allocation does not translate into the doubling of service delivery, so these are some of the issues we are facing. The other is the resource curse – a country well-endowed in natural resources and yet you do not see a link between that and poverty reduction. We are also generally a peaceful and democratic society which I think helps set the stage for social accountability work.

What we [CSPR] do is we seek to enhance public participation in national development planning in terms of the budget process and in terms of service delivery monitoring in key sectors: education, health, agriculture, water, social protection, and infrastructure. We coordinate CSO input into national development planning.

For example, Zambia is formulating its 7th National Development Plan, a 5-year plan and we help organize CSOs in their different specialties and seek to consolidate all those inputs that are submitted to government and incorporated into the national development planning process. We also do periodic review of implementation. We also do budget tracking and service delivery monitoring. We build capacity of communities to first understand the social accountability and rights-based approach, and know a bit more about resource allocation and also empower them to engage local authorities about the service delivery that they receive in those 6 key sectors. So we also seek to create the platforms for those engagements or interactions so they are able to dialogue in a progressive manner to see how issues can be dealt with over time.

How does politics affect your social accountability work: Specifically, for the elections that took place in August, it did have an effect because with the whole political process of the elections a lot of government officers were not open to CSOs or the public and were more preoccupied with the political process: who is voting for who, campaigning [etc.]. So civil society was more or a less at a standstill until after the elections. One thing of note is the lack of political will to legislate certain key legislation like the freedom of information. In Zambia, there is no piece of legislation that compels these government offices to release that information and that is a key problem that has affected our ability to get information to do budget tracking and service delivery activities. There was an attempt to enhance our Bill of Rights to include economic, social and cultural rights through a referendum but that did not go through.

What do you do when government does not respond to demands from the community: One key thing we learn about social accountability is that every few years we get the opportunity to do political accountability and decide to put in a new leader to see those changes you want to see. But in the Zambian context, the large majority of the citizens don't see a link between who they elect and the quality of services they get at the end of the day, there seems to a disconnect.

What I believe is that we need to think beyond the short term and ask what should we be doing to integrate social accountability thinking – that citizens have a right to demand for better services – into the everyday citizen without having to do PSAM training everywhere, because we don't have the capacity for that. We have to target education curriculum and have social accountability teaching being integrated into social studies aspect. The majority of students have no concept of social accountability. If we could integrate that sort of thinking at that level of education so that every pupil understands social accountability, then our job is done.

The case of Mozambique – Presented by Deborah Capella, Concern Universal Mozambique

We implement a programme called MuniSAM, we form and capacitate SAMComs [municipal social accountability monitoring committees], and we work with the SAMComs so they can monitor the municipalities, and work together with municipal assemblies using social accountability tools such as social audits, public hearings.

These are the tools that are working for us. From 2012 – 2015 MuniSAM worked as a support component lead by the government for citizen engagement, [and] it brought about many impacts such as resource collection increase such as tax campaigns developed by SAMCOMS, greater interaction between citizens and municipal bodies as an effect of the public hearings, and social audits. In 2016 it was integrated into a government lead programme, which was an innovation for us, which means we are implementing a component of citizen engagement within a programme which is led by the government.

[This] means that municipalities are more keen and able to not only [understand] our initiative but also understand the fact that social accountability is crucial in their own governance. It improves their governance, it improves the way citizens interact because you need the citizens to interact in order for municipalities to overcome their major challenges such as: poor resource collection, not having a lot of participation in their interventions, when it comes to voting not every citizen voting. So the government has understood that this is important for them, not only for civil society.

What did not work for us: in the beginning it was the perception of working alone, we could not work alone, we have to work with government and we have to work with them in a very constructive [way] and with a lot of dialogue. [This] means that these SAMCOMS that we promote or capacitate, they are not there only to monitor government performance, they must also understand that government have a lot of challenges, especially related to budget and lack of resources at the municipal level, and they must be able to cooperate with them and suggest local solutions that will work at each municipality.

Also what didn't work for us at the beginning is only working with civil society, because what we realized is that it's not just civil society that was not prepared to engage in the social accountability initiative, or on the social accountability cycle and initiatives, but it was also the municipal workers and municipal managers who didn't have the skills because they were voted by their parties and not based on their capacities.

So they were more trust people from the parties than specialists on what they were doing. So there was also a need to capacitate the supply side and not only the demand side in order to create a balance and to make this interaction more peaceful and also successful. So we had to create trust between actors because they were so apart. Municipal residents had no idea who members of their municipal assemblies were or what the purpose of their job was. Neither did the workers of the municipal council while the municipal organs felt so apart from citizens. So there was a need to create a bond and trust between both sides of government. So what we decided was to involve all actors in our capacity building, from the social accountability cycle, rules and responsibilities from the municipality.

What about political contestations: The relationship in the beginning - because when we started there were 3 [political] parties and the municipality was led by one - and in the beginning there was a lot of distrust, because if you working with one municipality that leads from one party then you are seen as the opposition and it creates problems. But you have to be consistent and persistent and show that your work has nothing to do with political parties. So our SAMComs cannot have anything to do with politics. So what we tell them is that you can all support your own soccer team but you cannot wear your jersey to work. So these are some of the small things that enabled us to continue to work and create a trust relationship. But also the news that you get [from the media] is not the real news, because in some districts there is real war, and the contestation is creating a lot of challenges, especially this year where it is dangerous to travel from one municipality to another. But, we cannot stop working and we try not to get involved in the political part of the struggle and put ourselves aside from discussing the political problems that are creating the struggle.

Methods used by politicians to avoid accountability in Mozambique: Politicians call people as opposition parties. For example, part of our capacity building is to incentivize people to go read the [strategic] plans and [municipal] budgets [and] in the beginning it happened a lot that they were told they had nothing to do with the plan, and asking [them] what party they [were] from. And it demotivates people because they don't want to be persecuted, they don't want to be seen to be part of the opposition or to be seen to have nothing better to do because they unemployed and just want to go and ask questions. Other methods are the fact that there is legislation, but the problem is their operationalization on the ground. They are not specific legislation of how it should happen. You have the law of access to information but at the local level there is no law that obligates local governments to give that information. You have the right to access but they don't have the duty to provide the information. We understood that it was important to get strong connections

with the municipality association, the Parliament, the Ministry for State Administration, so at the central level we strengthen our relationships with them, [for example] some people from Parliament went to the PSAM [Fundamentals of Social Accountability Monitoring] course. We use the relationships at the central level to influence at the municipal level. One of our municipalities that we have done 4 public hearings [with]: this year the president [of the municipality] decided not to give us the plans. So we had to go through the association and tried to influence him, and move in 3 presidents from other municipalities to talk with them. We had to get a letter from the Ministry [of State Administration] - and this is a municipality we've been working with for the last 4 years, so this kind of thing still happens. Where you don't have great relationships with local leaders, you use other influences. That is why coalitions and getting your relationships at the central level is so important.

You have to criticize but you also have to be able to bring about the good things. So in their social audit reports (the reports the SAMComs write to present at public hearings), they mustn't be always so critical. They must be open to what the municipal government has done, because they do things, and the problem is that most of the time there is no budget to do everything. They must be able to criticize what has not been done, [for example] what has been in the plans for the last 6 years, but also to say good things about what has been done. It's not only about monitoring but also about supporting.

For example, municipalities don't have the human resources or the financial resources to go to all of the neighborhoods and disseminate information, and so SAMComs do this work because they come from the neighborhoods and they have a budget and organize themselves and together with people from the council they do a lot of awareness campaigns. We helping you [the municipality] but we also monitoring you. The municipal government must see you as an advantage because if they see the advantage of working together with you, they will be more open to giving you information, [and] be there during the public hearings because they must be present to be accountable.



PASA delegates engage with panelists during one of the plenary discussions held during the conference.

5.3 The East African Context:

The case of Uganda – Presented by William Kidega, PATH Uganda

What we do: our role is to work to ensure that we improve the quality and availability, and accessibility of health and social services by working with other CSOs. The kind of work that is doable within our context: we have a tag line which says that ‘where everyone is accountable, everyone wins’. Accountability from both sides - from the citizens but also the duty bearers.

We work with champions at grassroots but also at national level. And also ensure that the media is aligned to provide visibility on the issues we are championing. We work with communities to monitor the quality of service delivery.

We use community scorecards, that is one key component that we use. Capacity building is a big one and without that, and if it’s not done sustainably, then it becomes a bigger challenge.

What is not doable: changing systemic challenges instantly is not a very easy thing. Of course in Uganda we do have a very fragile health system full of corruption, and waste and abuse, and issues related to funding, so changing systems over time takes a process. In the work we do we can be misconstrued for instigating the citizens because we work through a group of CSOs. So how can we work in harmony to avoid being seen as instigating the citizens against government? The other bit is confrontation versus roundtable discussions. Confrontation sometimes is misconstrued. I was part of a movement called Black Monday where we dress in black to challenge government on the ills of society. But often times you find citizens being tear gassed and being arrested and we see it doesn’t take us anywhere, so we had to say can we [rather] sit together and talk to generate issues?

The opportunities are participation in the process, enabling citizens to participate in processes right at grassroots to national level. How do you work with political leadership at grassroots but also aiming at working with parliamentarians at national level? How do we ensure that we strengthen oversight committees to ensure they play their role in monitoring oversight?

The case of Tanzania – Presented by Semkae Kilonzo, Policy Forum

The Policy Forum is a network of about 74 CSOs registered in Tanzania all brought together around public money and accountability. That is why we are interested in the PSAM approach, and we have been using it for 9 years now. So we’ve learnt a lot of lessons, some good and some difficult ones. For us speaking about social accountability is a difficult exercise. It reminds me of a quote “the idea of citizen participation is a bit like eating spinach, because you know it is good for you”: In our 9 years of implementing social accountability in Tanzania we’ve never come across anyone that is against it. They are all for social accountability once they understand the concept of the rights of the citizen and the duty of the duty bearer. But it has always been difficult because there are subtle challenges that I’d like to mention.

On the positive side: the PSAM approach has brought about a confidence in the citizens as well as the CBOs and CSOs that we’ve trained. Everyone who undergoes the PSAM approach course [Fundamentals of Social Accountability Monitoring course], they’ve always told us it makes sense, we understand better the PRM

[public resource management] framework, we able to engage with duty bearers with confidence. But the other thing is that it comes with quick wins that are useful to put in your annual report – a school didn't have a toilet and now it does, it didn't have water and now it does. But the challenge is moving up the next level, getting those systemic changes, those long term systemic changes. You can try and aggregate the little things but they don't amount to long term systemic changes – creating a different way in which government works, influencing that, that is harder to see and it is a long term endeavor.

Other things about the PSAM approach is that it can fit many contexts. [For example], you can use it for gender mainstreaming, we've had partners who've worked on the approach in forest management, and revenues from the extractive.

What works: Number 1 is identifying and working with champions. We tend to forget about this or are not cognizant of this. Government, we tend to take it as one homogenous entity, but it is made up of individuals, individuals like me and you who want to see improvement in services. If the lives of communities improve, then our lives improve, we do have interests that are common goals but we tend to interact in ways that don't seem to suggest that. [Number 2] is the importance of thinking politically, we don't put a concerted effort and investment in thinking politically. Some politicians understand what you need and what communities need but they are bound by election cycles, especially the politicians they have a 5-year term, so they need to collect evidence of their worthiness in terms of 5-year cycles.

Another unique challenge in Tanzania is that politicians don't understand the role of CSOs. The shyness we feel in attempting to venture into politics, we almost see it as a shameful thing. But the fact is that issues of water, education, health are political issues. You cannot narrow them down into just election cycles or individuals wanting power. So I think them understanding you cannot disentangle what we do and politics. And if essentially we are made to look like politicians, that is fine, we need to engage with the political processes if we are going to see meaningful change in the process.

Another accusation that comes from the duty bearer is a perceived coziness with the donor community in our countries. We are many times accused of carrying a foreign agenda and not being in the best interests of the community or of the nation. But I would always go back and say, particularly in a country like ours, at least an amount of its budget is contributed by donors, so I would ask the same question of government – are you implementing a foreign agenda – no, you are doing it in the interests of the people.

Another one is the importance of mixing up bottom up approaches with top down approaches.

A lot of times we tell our donors that we working on social accountability monitoring and we frame it the way they frame it. They see it as building the capacity of demand side to demand for accountability to improve the social services. But in actual fact when CSOs engage bottom up approaches they see a longer term and more solid improvement. But we not feeding that back to donors, we should be able to tell them that.

The Magufuli effect in Tanzania is an important one because it is an example of how the system changes when the guy at the top makes a concerted effort to say 'I'm going to curb the ills of the country'. The agendas that CSOs were struggling with in Tanzania for decades: the problem of tax exemptions for multinationals and big business, he makes one pronouncement and it is solved. The port doesn't function in about 20 years, now it's a really efficient port, and in terms of service delivery people on the ground are

saying that things are improving, accountability has increased, domestic resource mobilization has improved, this year's budget has almost zero contribution from the donor community. But the big question is now, is this sustainable, can we rely on one man bringing about the change over time?

The way CSOs are designed in Africa are quite different to the way they are designed in the Global North. Here it is mostly seen as a job, an employment opportunity and in the North it's about getting the change done. So I believe CSOs have a role to play in Africa, particularly in the grass roots. I think the conventional CSOs what they can do is to facilitate and be the broker between the less organized CBOs and the duty bearer rather than going into implementing and analyzing.

The case of Kenya – Presented by Michael Orwa, Society for International Development (SID)

We do three things: research, inclusive dialogues and action. The Kenya Dialogues Project is what we had hoped to transform the SID to a think-and-do-tank. The Kenya Dialogues Project is a Constitution tracking, monitoring and promotion programme.

Many of you are aware in 2010 Kenya passed one of the most progressive Constitutions and it gave certain promises to the citizens and we chose to focus on three of those promises. Over and above that what is present across the whole Constitution was the promise of devolution: bringing services closer to the people, bringing leadership and government closer to the people, but ultimately really putting decision making power within the hands of citizens at the local level. So historically we've had a strong central government and the Constitution brought devolution, and we ended up with 47 counties and one national government.

So we [SID] thought we'd focus on three promises: one is equality and non-discrimination, especially in service delivery and access to opportunities; number 2 is integrity and anti-corruption work; and number 3 is public participation.

And we are particularly interested in meaningful public participation, from not just information to meaningful information, usable information. We do this work in the context of what we call the Active Citizenship Programme. I know a lot of emphasis often goes on how the system never works or on how politicians and leaders never deliver, and we thought that even if we ended up with gods and goddesses [in government], and citizens ended up in the same state of helplessness, the Constitution would never be realized, so the premise of our programmes is that we need to change the thinking and perspective of citizens. Thereby 70% of our focus is on citizens – transforming them, working with them, supporting their capacity and interest in order to engage meaningfully with the elected and appointed officials. So we divide our work into two – active citizenship working with citizens to improve their capacity and levels of confidence to engage meaningfully and to track what is happening at the local level. And number 2 is to work with duty bearers to improve access to information and open, inclusive governance.

I would say generally in politics in Africa, and I think in the other panels there is almost a feeling that we apologetic to talk about social accountability in a political context. Yet it is actually not just in the 'small p', but is the 'big P' that should anchor social accountability. There is nothing more political than social accountability because you are asking people to ask questions that we are not used to asking in the political context of this continent.

You are asking citizens to be not just rights-holders but to appreciate and act on their obligations as citizens; to remove them from the comfort zone of what we call the NGO-isation of empowerment, where you empower through disempowerment because we believe the government must do, will do, can do and you have to bribe people to help them. Unless we start having inconvenient conversations with the citizenry and transforming their energies to the positive space of possibilities, we cannot erode the cynicism that undermines service delivery.

In our project we are very particular about the things we do, but even more firm on the things we don't do. We engage with organized communities, we only act within communities that are sufficiently organized and motivated to take the frontline in the agenda of their own transformations. Until we do that with communities it becomes a conversation about rights without obligations. It is a difficult conversation because of the way NGOs entered into this continent as oppositional to the state.

I think in terms of the Kenyan context is we are not just grappling with impunity and corruption, but what we are experiencing is state-led corruption and state-led impunity - that the state is at the centre of furthering impunity and undermining anti-corruption work, and I think devolution in the Kenyan context has a positively disruptive effect on our politics. One is that the 47 counties went back to ethnic districts so most are predominantly mono-ethnic, which is a bad thing from the national project perspective. But if you look at the value of devolution in disrupting that [corruption] you see that every county will receive significant resources from the government, and for the last 3 years they have focused on the need to receive more money from the national government, and we are seeing a twist on that saying it is great to get more money but can we start by telling us what you have done with the little and that conversation will be intra-ethnic. At one point we'll reach a level where we can question within the county.

Number 2 is that there are very clear laws that require public participation. We have evidence of counties where they have not been able to act on budgets being spent because citizens have organized themselves and went to court to stop the process because there was no citizen participation. The lesson is can we move from participation to meaningful participation, where people are not ambushed, given a budget and told please go through this and let's get feedback and they tick the box that participation happened. So the next struggle is how do we make participation meaningful.

There is so much to say, there is so much we do through partners, and; public interest litigation is probably one of the important aspects in realizing the constitutional promises in Kenya. We realized if we are honest with ourselves there are always competing interests and competition for resources, and that is the same for government and that is really at the core of understanding advocacy – how do you move your agenda to the top of the priority list?

We have very vibrant public litigation work going on, especially around promoting economic, cultural and social rights. In addition, there is work we've done which is being intentionally disruptive when we have to be. One is a principled partnership model with the state, so we are consistent in our commitment to work with government across all levels. So it is ok if we don't agree today, but we are committed to continue knocking on your door and telling you in a language that speaks to your interests. Every government is interested in legitimacy and to use their tools and their public commitments to remind them why certain decisions or certain indecisions are not working, is in their best interest.

Coalitions and alliances: [we need] to admit we will never be masters and mistresses in everything, and to look for, identify, and work with frontline institutions in particular issues. We have several organisations that we partner with to drive particular agendas and we give them the political mileage and visibility to build themselves as well.

Number 3 is localized direct action is important. Participation in the productive sense, but there is also a right to disruptive participation. It can be constructive or destructive, and both are legitimate. Disruptive participation is what we call 'righteous madness'. For example, in January 2015 we did a lot of stuff around social media including policy conversations every week on Twitter. If you remember there was something around a primary school in Nairobi [where] a senior government official had grabbed a piece of land and was building a hotel but now also wanted to grab the playground. We went online and said 'who are the most passionate people talking about this issue online' and brought them together. We then did research on the issue, and had given the institutions of government time to act and then had their commitment to act before school started, and by the time the school opened and the wall was still up, the righteous madness was legitimized. We worked with communities, citizens, parents, children, teachers, elected and appointed officials - who were intimidated by the powers that be so could not act in their space, but we reached out to their best inner interest, and to use the information that they could provide - to organize public direct action. The only things left to be grabbed by public officials are public amenities and institutions. So we have government officers writing to us saying what you have done in schools, please can you come to prisons, police stations, health institutions. There was a question of 'what if I don't participate', and we thought very hard about how do you answer that question and we came up with one simple answer - 'what is the cost of non-participation?' If you can answer that then you will participate.



The case of Rwanda – Presented by Betty Wamala, World Vision

Our approach to social accountability is called Citizen Voices in Action [CVA]. We've seen that it's workable to provide information to citizens because this is key. You can use media, media is very effective, once something comes up in the media it will put government on its toes and it will begin doing something. You can also use meetings to pass key information to citizens and without this information the citizens may not be able to engage. Then after that you need to create platforms for them to engage. What we need to know is that you may create new platforms, but you could also make use of existing platforms because there are some countries where it is restricted to create platforms, so take advantage of those platforms that are already existing. For example, in Rwanda, when we saw that it wasn't so easy to enter with CVA because they were wondering 'what do you want to do with our citizens', we entered through what is called Joint Action and Development Forum, because that is what is existing. In Uganda, you would enter through what is called

the baraza's [community meetings], in other countries you would enter from participatory budgeting. That should be your entry point, you think of platforms where the citizens are able to engage.

We saw that it's also doable to work through existing structures, there is no need for us to create parallel structures as we do our social accountability work, you can work through the CBOs, and then other structures at different levels. We've seen that the short route and long route both work because some of the issues that you find at community level regarding service delivery cannot be addressed at that level so we have been able to help citizens engage with their service providers, but also go beyond the service providers to engage with the policy makers. Also working with different stakeholders is very key and doable. If you do it by yourself you won't be able to accomplish much. So you realise you need to work with CBOs, and local government, and even CSOs at the national level.

What is not workable: doing social accountability without evidence. If you don't have evidence you cannot do social accountability because government will ask you so many questions.

Also in the beginning it was not easy for some people to do social accountability. I'm saying the poorest of the poor, because their esteem is too low, so you might need to start with the poorer of the poor to make some gains, and then bring in the poorest of the poor. We've also found that in some of the restrictive governments like Sudan we have not been able to do social accountability [at all], it is not doable. But in others, we say you may have to come through existing structures. Security is another [factor] because they will say that this is classified information. But you can do some quick wins like maybe comparing number of security people to the citizens. Opportunities exist for us in East Africa because many of the countries have ratified many international commitments. For example, if you look at the current SDG 16 some of the components are looking at social accountability, so you can take advantage of that. Once we empower citizens the elections are a time for them to demand for social accountability. The country Constitutions have those rights that citizens have the right to demand social accountability, so we can take that as an opportunity for us. Another opportunity is to bring on board the private sector because they also want to see good service delivery.



PASA delegates interacted with community members during the field visits to local schools and clinics. Here Maria Khumalo (left) a member of the Ngwazini CVA committee speaks to delegates, and Ngwazini Primary School head teacher (right), Ntsetselelo Dlamini, makes further remarks.

5.4 Research, methods and context:

What research methods can be used in different contexts for generating knowledge in and on social accountability interventions – Presented by Bill Walker, Research Advisor, World Vision Australia

Research methods and approaches are especially important in social accountability because they help to generate, systematise and evaluate new knowledge. Social accountability interventions (SAIs) are themselves approaches whose success rely on using citizen methods which generate, systematise and evaluate contextual knowledge about gaps between policy and reality³, which makes methods part of the DNA of SAIs. Since gaps fluctuate over time, SAIs need feedback loops to monitor and evaluate whether, and how gaps have closed, and understand why.

The power of SAIs lies in the ways in which, over time, they facilitate constructive, peaceful contests between citizens and with governments over what the substance of policies ought to be and how they should be implemented.

Appropriately aligning research approaches to study SAIs with methods *in* SAIs enriches and makes sense of these contests, by helping to understand why accountability is lacking and how it can be increased.

1. Multiple methods which develop useful theory are valuable for making social accountability work better. One such method is **realist review**, which allows evidence from different kinds of published studies to be systematised into useful theory. Core to realist review method is identifying and linking contextual factors (C), causal mechanisms (M) and outcomes (O). Chains of these CMOs are discovered by using available evidence from good quality studies to understand and explain the pathways by which an SAI works⁴.
2. **Case study method** is one of many different types. Here I focus on several sorts of *explanatory case study* useful for building social accountability theory. One type of explanatory case study is *realist case study*. *Nested case study* is another case study approach useful to understand and explain how social accountability moves beyond a local facility level to subnational and national levels.⁵
3. **Action research (AR)** is a powerful family of methods for producing actionable knowledge on a system or sub-system. An individual, group or community can systematically generate knowledge by imagining and planning action, taking action, reflecting on and evaluating that action as the basis for new cycles. There are different varieties of action research:
 - **Participatory action research, and participatory monitoring and evaluation**, facilitated reframing of social audits and scorecards, resulting in Community-Based Performance Monitoring (CBPM) as a hybrid scorecard approach. Subsequent AR cycles made it possible to reflect on and evaluate CBPM as a social accountability framework and methodology, which led to asking deeper questions and testing reframed CBPM practice.

³ For a masterful synthesis of a large body of research on SAIs which demonstrates methods for systematising research findings see Jonathan Fox's article FOX, J. A. 2015. Social Accountability: What Does the Evidence Really Say? *World Development*, 72, 346-361.

<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X15000704>. My argument here about the central role of generating knowledge in SAIs builds on this article by using several realist reviews and multiple nested case studies. His central conclusion - that SAIs must build virtuous cycles to overcome low accountability traps, which exist in vicious cycles, and his associated proposals remains a very valuable theoretical starting point for researching SAIs.

⁴ For more details see the summary <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Default.aspx?tabid=3450> and the report <http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/pdf/outputs/SystematicReviews/Community-accountability-2014-Westthorp-report.pdf>

⁵ For an example, see: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11213-016-9368-5>. This article also explains how CVA systematises knowledge, using loops for feedback and learning.

- Several types of action research cycles assisted in catalysing this reframing:
 - **Appreciative inquiry** cycles applied to CBPM aided in reimagining CBPM as a strengths-based social accountability intervention
 - **Rights-based action research** explored how rights and citizenship were implicit in CBPM, and by making them explicit (e.g. in active citizenship practice) helped transform CVA into a rights-based social accountability intervention.
 - 4. Another participatory research method useful for studying SAIs is **Most Significant Change (MSC)**. SAI participants reflect on the most significant change they experienced, and tell focused MSC stories to create new systematised knowledge, which gives fresh insight into what is driving accountable relationships, or not.
-

Social accountability and citizen participation in devolved contexts: Case studies from Kenya and South Africa – Presented by Yeukai Mukorombindo, programme officer, PSAM & Zukiswa Kota, Education Researcher, PSAM, South Africa.

The devolved system of governance is designed to place citizens at the core of monitoring and influencing decision-making in public policy. The objective of devolution is to oblige governments to promote and facilitate citizen participation in the development of local plans, budgets and policies. Linked to this fundamental principle of social accountability is the right for citizens to hold the state accountable for the provision of services and efficient use of public resources. Does devolution create better outcomes for citizen participation and social accountability? If so why or why not? What lessons can social accountability practitioners glean from looking at the devolved system of governance in two different contexts - Kenya and South Africa. Ongoing doctoral research⁶ on citizen participation in newly devolved Kenya revealed that despite a new constitution designed to decentralize governance and promote local citizen participation in local budgeting and planning processes, this did not necessarily translate into practice.

Preliminary findings indicate a lack of clarity and failure to implement participation regulations by county governments, poor monitoring and very little demands for accountability by citizens. Furthermore, citizens appear unable and unwilling to seize the opportunities availed to them through the constitution to participate in public policy making processes. Notable civic voices argue that the invited space for citizens' engagement still remain inaccessible, exclusionary and captured by elites to reinforce the status quo.

Public participation legislation is also a key difference between Kenya's and South Africa's local governments. Kenya has developed specific public participation frameworks beyond the constitution, describing exactly how participation will be rolled out at the local government level. South Africa does not have specific public participation legislation beyond Section 118 of the constitution, which broadly mentions that citizens have the right to be involved in public policy through the legislature. However, South Africa does have constitutional and legislative frameworks that allows the enjoyment of the right to social accountability. A right to information law is essential for social accountability as it creates an enabling environment and culture of transparency and accountability. It also empowers citizens to engage in evidence based advocacy

⁶ Presentation is based on Yeukai Mukorombindo's doctoral research on citizen participation in newly devolved Kenya and Zukiswa Kota's experiences of working as a research at the PSAM in South Africa

interventions. Unlike Kenya, SA has had an information law for more than 10 years, but despite the existence of an enabling environment, the South African people have not taken up the opportunities.

The Kenyan experience provides opportunities for CSOs to participate in a joint participation body with other non-state actors and state actors in bodies called County Budget and Economic Forums (CBEFs) at the local government levels established to facilitate the public's participation in local government planning and budgeting. The Kenyan experience revealed that most CSOs and NGOs are not doing budget work and most are not engaging with budget and planning processes and documents. The capacity and willingness of civil society to engage with local government depends on the experience, nature and history of the organization. Some NGOs and CSOs are choosing to engage outside of the provided collaborative platforms engaging in social accountability in their own ways, on their own terms.

The South African experience highlighted the following points: South Africa did once upon a time have a joint coalition body called the Budget and Economic Forum (BEMF) which consisted of a group of civil society organizations working at monitoring resource allocation, and performance in health and education at the national and sub-national levels. Unfortunately, the group has since collapsed and although new coalitions have since emerged such as the Eastern Cape Health Crisis Coalition (EHCAC)⁷, South African non state actors have not learnt from the demise of BEMF to better improve and strengthen the new coalition bodies and partnership spaces.

The experiences of implementing social accountability and citizen participation in devolved contexts has highlighted the following lessons:

- 1. Legislation and devolution do not always improve social accountability. Furthermore, it is much easier to mobilize citizens to demand legislation for greater participation in decision making processes than it is to mobilize and educate citizens to monitor the implementation of such laws and the performance of public officials.**
- 2. Civil society organisations that interact with local governments most effectively were ones with a history of experience in advocacy and engaging with local government. Regions with a strong leadership, well organized and collaborative civil society which learn from previous coalitions are likely to overcome constraints and achieve effective social accountability outcomes.**



⁷ A Coalition of organisations and individuals who are campaigning to fix the Eastern Cape health system which has collapsed in many parts of the province. <http://www.ehealthcrisis.org/>

7. The role of key stakeholders

A number of panel discussions were held during the conference which allowed presentations by specific stakeholders within the social accountability field. The discussion below recounts the presentations made in the following panels:

- The government officials panel which asked officials to respond to how they feel about citizens' requests for accountability.
- The panel discussion with print and electronic media which asked presenters to reflect on how they balance writing news that sells with ensuring their oversight role is fulfilled through the promotion of accountability in the public sector.
- A panel of Swaziland youth allowed delegates the opportunity to engage with some active young people around their social accountability perspectives. Rather than a verbatim account of the panel, the report includes a summary of the panel produced by the PASA media team.

6.1 Understanding the perspective of government as a stakeholder in social accountability

Presented by a Tsepang Lekhela, District Health Manager, Ministry of Health, Lesotho.

Social accountability is a tool for success. Because if the CVA model says what are the standards, it means as a service provider I have to know what the standards are and I have to implement those standards. It was a learning opportunity for the stakeholders – the community and service providers. The community is also told what is expected from them, not just what is expected from the service providers. Social accountability for us was able to improve the health services: the monitoring by the community motivated me to monitor ourselves. It helped to promote the relationship between the health care workers and the community because the community understands their responsibilities. The communities are being educated and it also helped to promote service delivery demands. Unless the community is involved, we cannot reach our targets. Community participation and ownership of health services [is vital], because everyone should be responsible for their health not just the service providers, individuals should be in charge of their health.

Presented by Pinkie Masuku, Guidance Councilor, Ministry of Education, Swaziland.

I think we are still grappling with the idea and the concept of social accountability, it is still a new concept and as government we still need to be more educated on social accountability. But that doesn't mean we have not started working towards achieving and delivering services to the communities. I've seen the Ministry of Health able to push government to provide better services in their communities, the nurses are in collaboration with the traditional leaders, so everyone is participating. I can say Swaziland is committed to ensuring that citizens have good service delivery.

Citizens are expected to use different structures such as to lobby and advocate for service delivery, thereby promoting participatory governance.

Our Tinkhundla system does promote participatory governance. The political structure in Swaziland is such that we have the Invuna Inkhundla, that is leaders of the constituencies, who liaise with people at the

grassroots levels and identify the needs that are particular to their context. Ideally, the Invuna is supposed to work closely with the politicians and Parliamentarians of that Inkhundla to make sure that the community agenda is given priority at the political level. For example, if communities have concerns around policy issues, this should be addressed through their MPs and they relate that back at Parliament. However, this does not occur because of limited resources, and this is where partnerships come in because our government relies on partnerships to close those gaps where a community needs resources. The strengthening of the partnerships with the government does improve the lives of citizens, more so when we look at the statistics – 63% [of Swazi's] live below the poverty line, this is further exacerbated by natural disasters such as drought and makes participants become limited. At the school level (my area is the schools) when we get to the schools they have structures to push their agendas: the school communities, parents, teachers, community leaders to make sure schools are conducive for learning. Our structures, we are using the Inqaba Model - the schools as centers of care and support - to make sure that our schools are schools of excellence, where children can find solace and refuge. Through the Inqaba, we have at the national level the National Coordinating Unit and then we have the Regional Coordinating Unit, and also the partners at regional level (NGOs). And then we have at school level the school support teams, these are the ones that are pushing advocacy. Through CVA it has enhanced what we already have as the Ministry of Education which could push for the betterment of schools and making sure learners are in a conducive environment.

Presented by James Malupande, Education Planner, Ministry of Education, Zambia.

CVA has brought this awareness for groups of pupils and traditional leaders and teachers. As a nation we hold the CVA and in the Ministry [of Education] as very important, and when it started in Zambia they followed the structures that were already there, the manpower was ready to go. We now have a problem because now we are working extra hours because the citizens are pulling us to come and address problems. To me, information has gone to the citizen and now they know. The policies have always been there, but now they know about them.

Without information you can't have a voice.

And then they call us to do the action. If you don't do the action at the district level, then you get a call from the Permanent Secretary to address the problem. To us social accountability it's there, we are being accountable to the same standards we gave to the community.

CVA came in and in Zambia it does not bring out its own activities. Like in the Ministry of Education, they will look at our annual work plan and budgets and activities, and then it is from those activities that they will come up with some activities so that together they are not doing parallel activities. Sometimes there are budget gaps - what we budget and what comes out are totally different. But then CVA comes, it has the facilities and logistics and we implement, but we do not implement what is not in government policy. The question is why this information is not reaching the communities, because the information is there but is not reaching communities.

Presented by Khanyisile Nkabindze, Regional Matron, Ministry of Health, Swaziland

We using Community Score Cards so with the scorecard you will sit with the community and identify the challenges they have as a community. As we are working with the communities it is better to work and find solutions with them.

Using the scorecard was a real eye opener because at times we'll see that a problem might just be a lack of understanding.

[For example], a clinic was without a toilet, so they approached the community which then built the toilet.

We want to thank World Vision for bringing CVA to the schools. Now there is no tendency of mismanagement of funds because the school committees are watchdogs, they can see if there is mismanagement of funds, they can see if something is going wrong. [For example], the feeding scheme where some teachers used to take the food for themselves, but now that is a thing of the past because of the CVA, because they can advocate. They can call the regional offices, they can say a lot of things if they can't see what is happening. So we wish this agenda could now be pushed up to national level in Parliament where policies are being made.

Delegate Questions	Presenter Responses
How free are communities to organize in Swaziland for holding someone to account?	The inkundla system is working for us in the country because where I am from before you go to the inkundlas there is the regional administrator who you approach who gives you the go ahead to approach the Inkundla. To the inkundla there is invuna inkundla the head of that inkundla and there is bucopho from each consistency in that area, so whatever message you come with you express yourself to the inkundla constituency and they go out to their communities.
The public is involved in the implementation, but are the involved in the planning process- when you come up with your strategic plans are citizens involved in coming up with those plans?	When we look at how do you call for a meeting, in Zambia, we do not have a lot of problems, you have to ask the chief who is involved, and those that do not want to attend the meeting they will have to deal with traditional ways of sorting out such problems. [For example], if we are building a classroom, they will say each village should bring so many bricks, and the village headman is taxed by the chief [if they don't comply] and a deadline is given, and those who fail [to contribute] will face the chief. People know what the chief has decreed is held, and if you are coming up with any other set up then the chief has to know and if he makes a decree then everyone will follow.
Is it ok to keep it small, one village or community at a time? Do we always have to scale up?	We have a problem that the region where I come from has 10 zones where we cluster schools and the CVA is only in 2 [schools], so the others are having problems because they are seeing what is happening at the other schools where there is learning. So we tell them 'go and learn from your friends that you can replicate'. If there are things we have learnt from CVA which we have replicated without any other help or funding from any other we just use the same amount of money or sometimes it is just to tell them to go ahead, like a school garden. So that is what we feel can help in scaling up. Somethings are too good to be kept in one place.

6.2 Understanding the perspective of the media as a stakeholder in social accountability



Media panel presenters: Martin Dlamini (Swaziland Broadcasting & Information Services), Martin Dlamini (Times of Swaziland), Caroline Khene (MobiSAM) & Jimmy Maliseni (Alliance for Community Action).

Presented by Jimmy Maliseni: Alliance for Community Action (ACA), Zambia

In order for civil society to find news that sells and moves the media away from ‘speech journalism’, civil society must begin to train media practitioners on how to look for actual news in events, even in events like this one [PASA].

The media in Zambia needs to be trained on how to interrogate the actual story and not the speeches that the Ministers don’t write themselves, they don’t even know what they are talking about when they are reading those speeches. But the joke is for civil society to train the media to understand exactly what social accountability is and how social accountability can become attractive within the media context.

I changed my approach and the way I see stories after undergoing the PSAM training [Fundamentals of Social Accountability Monitoring course]. When I went back to Zambia I had a whole different approach which has resulted in training that we are now doing as ACA. So, to start with, CSOs must understand that the media is not very technical in many things and we don’t have a media in Zambia which has specialists in terms of the way that CNN has. [For example], they have business journalists, political journalists, sports journalists, people that understand the trade or the business. In Zambia, they crisscross everything - today he is a soccer commentator, tomorrow he’s interviewing the Minister of Finance, and the next day he is talking to the Minister of Health, so they [journalists] are all over the place and they don’t know much about anything. One day they are attending the opening of Parliament, the next day they are interrogating the budget, they don’t understand all that stuff.

So it is up to civil society to begin to train the media to begin to understand how does the government operate, how does social accountability [work], how can they link for example the budget to service failure, how can they link the AG [Auditor General] report to service failure, how does that relate to delivery of services to the people?

However, in doing so, the media must transfer the ownership of social accountability to the people. So our approach is that civil society knows and understands how government should operate, so let them take that to the media and the media invite the people [citizens] to do the actual work. The reason we do that is because civil society are usually seen as political or aligned to one political side or the other, so the government will not listen to their voice. The media also in one way or another seem to be inclined to one side or the other of the political divide, however the people will always be the people.

Presented by Carolyn Khene: MobiSAM, South Africa

What we've come to realise is that there are a number of aspects that you have to take into consideration when you are interacting with various actors such as media, citizens, government when you trying to introduce a tool to support social accountability monitoring. We have [for example] individual citizen reports on a service delivery issue, and you have civic action which is done by CSOs, so there needs to be a case where civil society, civic action and journalism can meet together to be able to engage and hold government to account for services, but also interact with government to be able to inform them about what the issues are in relation to service delivery. At MobiSAM we have an application which consist of a smart phone application, but we also take into consideration that not everyone has a smartphone so they can also SMS a report or service delivery issue in the municipality. We also have a Facebook page where people can make reports about an issue, and this is also open to media so that they can see how government is responding to a particular issue that has been reported on a service delivery problem. The idea is that we don't want government to make it seem that we always pointing fingers at them, but to also see the value in working with such a system. So what we have is a ticketing aspect. There are a lot of issues with internal communication in our very resource constrained municipalities so [we asked] how can we link up the MobiSAM application with internal communication [at the municipality] to improve the flow and tracking of service delivery reports? But also for managers within the municipality to be able to identify where people are not delivering and also to gather evidence-based data that they can use for planning and budgeting based on the reports that citizens are making. The smartphone app deals mainly with water, sanitation, electricity and roads. So the citizen or the journalist would make a report about an issue in their area and they would be able to take a photograph and that would be stored within the system and [the system] provides summaries. And this is an important page for journalists because you able to actually hold government to account for not delivering on an issue. When a lot of citizens make a report about an issue you can see it clearly on the map and the good thing is that it should be accessible to all citizens, and accessible to government and accessible to media.

And we had to come to an agreement with government that they will engage with this {App} because in a way, if they do address the issues, it promotes their image and also improves their communication, so that it is two-way communication not just one-way communication.

When you initiate some project that deals with social accountability and citizen engagement, there has to be a lot of engagement with government to build the capacity and responsiveness to actual citizen's requests, as well as building the capacity of citizens to be able to engage in understanding what their rights are. Through this there needs to be a lot of stakeholder engagement with CSOs and media, national government, and various associations within the area.

Presented by Martin Dlamini: Times of Swaziland, Swaziland

In the Swaziland context, in the newspaper context, how do we engage?

I think as a newspaper, we are now more engaged with civil society in terms of instead of engaging Ministers and their speeches, each time the Minister has an engagement and speaks about what government has done in a community, each weekend we now go out to that community to find out if in fact what has been said is what actually exists on the ground.

And more often than not in the Monday newspaper you would find issues of the things that the Minister said that are not happening in the community. And we'll go back to civil society and get comment on that and say what is their comment and what is their reaction and what are the steps that need to be taken?

So we've taken that approach to being more socially responsible and accountable to our readers. We are in business, we cannot lie about it, we work to sustain ourselves and our balance is to say what percentage do we give to news that sells and what sort of percentage do we give to social responsibility issues. I think it's fair to say it will be skewed to 60-40: 60% of news that sells and 40% of social responsibility. Partly also because the nature of our news coverage is determined by the market that reads us. We do have a monitoring system where we get feedback from people about what news they want to read and more often than not it is the indicators from your circulation that tell you that social issue needs to be captured in a way that is captivating enough for them to want to engage in that piece of news item. And that determines our approach. So we do have those dynamics that we are grappling with in the newsroom. It is a challenge that we are working on. But over and above that, what our approach is to engage more with civil society, get their voice, get their views heard in the paper so that we get a better interaction with the public, and get a better response, so that they feel the need to buy more, get more and get more engaged.

Presented by Martin Dlamini: Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services, Swaziland

On the issue of agenda-setting: over time as you work in various media institutions you begin to understand that the issue of objectivity in media is a myth. Out of all the stories that are happening around the country or the city or around any locality, the very fact that we have editorial meetings to decide which story we must cover and which story we do not cover, speaks to the fact that we are subjective in the way that we operate. Hence when we then say 'what emphasis should we put for example in community based stories', if we chose one place over another, that is a subjective decision to be taken. Now what I have noticed since I've been there for 2 years, I'm noticing and I'm questioning the quality of education that is coming from universities in terms of the quality of journalists that our institutions are churning out.

Speaking of speeches and how they are reported, we have struggles and to get those who are sent to do the stories to be able to get an interesting angle from a story or what might be an angle that speaks to the community or to citizens. In other words, if there is a story or an event, how do you start the story so that it is meaningful to you, so it doesn't stay a government story, so that whatever is said or unpacked even if it is a speech, how do you approach it when you read it or when you are there to take notes so that it is meaningful to you as a person that government is responsible for? Why do you choose this angle for example, why couldn't you interview a person that is affected by this particular project at community level?

What we have been criticized for, and quite correctly, is not being able to cover all the regions on a daily basis. So what we have done now is to restructure the newsroom, and coming back to technologies we rely more on what technologies can provide so that we change the old business model. What can we do in terms of technology, for example in assigning reporters and editors to a specific region [different] from where we are? And also being able to cultivate news sources from communities that will bring news in from wherever they are, and once in a while you go down to the place if there is something very critical, rather than not having regional coverage or community coverage all together. How can we apply technology so that we can actually do that?

And so as a government funded institution, one challenge we do have is that communities are not well covered, but we need to change the model to say how can we convert the specific focus from communities and the news emanating from there coming up this way? For example in terms of some of the students or graduates coming out of journalism institutions who are unemployed, how do we get them to be stringers from where they live within the regions to be able to be working for us? It's quite a tricky situation but we are trying to slowly change that so that we can better serve some of the issues that have been referred to.

Delegate Questions	Presenter Responses
In regards to finding media space, how can we as CS negotiate media space in a media landscape that is heavily politicized, especially during an election year? Who makes the decisions, who passes the decisions about what gets published?	In my opinion it begins by civil society stopping to lie to ourselves that we have nothing to do with politics. So if civil society can agree that civil society work, especially social accountability work is political. Get right to the heart of it. Then how do you package social accountability as political messages. So if you are going to talk about healthcare, then politicize it, point out that it is because of bad politics that we don't have medicine, it is because of politics that we don't have this. But don't do it yourself, let the people themselves do it through the media and that way the politicians have no finger to point at you as civil society because all you've done is that you've taught the people what the Constitution says you have rights A, B, C, D and government has not delivered it.
I want to find out how relevant really are newspapers with the rise of social media and technology?	It doesn't make us entirely irrelevant, it does affect us, it is affecting us. The trends are moving online, our figures we always monitor who is reading our paper, where and how and our website statistics are growing. It is something we are dealing with as a newspaper to how we can link the online with the print to ensure that we remain relevant, because if we don't deal with that we'll find ourselves extinct very soon. The community newspapers that are more focused on social issues are finding it a challenge to survive and they have had to remodel themselves. They have to make themselves more interesting to the communities that they serve and balance out the community aspect with what is interesting to the public and what is of public interest. So it is a balancing act in the newsrooms. It is a challenge but it is something we are dealing with.
We've seen the Arab spring and events driven by the youth adopting platforms to put forward their agendas, and I'd like to know how does that space put pressure on mainstream media in a way that asks us to rethink the way that we get news out there?	It differs from country to country. What we've done as ACA we train community radio stations and we encourage the communities that we work in to use those radio stations because then they have a higher chance of being heard or being covered. What we've done is also ask the media to go the social media way. So when we train the community radio stations, how we tell them to distribute the content is to upload them to their Facebook pages, ask them to open up Youtube accounts and upload videos. But to answer the question, is that we must migrate to being a social world. The only challenge is accessibility. For example, the last statistics shows only about 1.6 million Zambians have access to the internet on their phones in a country with 30 million people, so the penetration levels are

	<p>the real problem activism is not. The Zambian cyberspace is very vocal, but it is very small so they cannot influence much. South Africa is different, Kenya also has had a worldwide trend on Twitter. In Zambia even if everyone went online at the same time it would not be noticed anywhere. So the challenge for us is [internet] penetration and if we can have access to these ICTS then the change can be done.</p>
<p>I worked as a journalist for quite some time and I used to cover parliament in Uganda, and my question is - you are a trained journalist and there are those so-called human interest stories and how do you balance between the state agenda, the interests of the state, and the human perspective, the stories that concern and tackle the livelihood of people but at the same time depict badly on government?</p>	<p>As I said, I come from the public broadcaster and the last meeting we had we spoke about revamping the newsroom, and it doesn't matter what story you are sent to write it's about how you approach it. If for example you get any story whether it is critical of government or not, what they teach you in journalism 101 is that you balance it. So if so-and-so says this, you give the person on the other side to be able to respond. Either way, whatever you do must be able to balance out. What we are seeing is for us is there is some level of compromise of the profession with regard to how we are approaching the stories as just basic journalism. You balance it and this is what we've asked for. Even if you get a speech [from a government official], you get the citizen or human angle on it so that the person who is listening is able to connect with it.</p>
<p>Caroline you have been working in this space, how do you ensure that the use of this technology is sustainable and that people can use technology to enhance their lives? And also how journalists can really benefit from this information and really take it back to the people, how do we make sure that it is something that continues rather than being a hindrance?</p>	<p>When we did our baseline study, about 80% of people have a cellphone but we not sure what type of cellphone and whether they can use the cellphone for the purposes that are available. So it is more than just the technology. So having liaisons with existing CSOs, they have to engage with media and with projects like ours to make sure that we have liaisons with people in the community to train those people to use the technology or to make reports on their behalf about issues that they have. The difference with this kind of project is 'who's project is it' – is it going to end up being a government project and are we sure they are going to use it properly? Is it for citizens who are going to control it? Are government going to be willing to work with citizens who are pointing fingers at them? Is it media who also have their own agenda? So there is that question mark of who is that interface that is going to continue to exist that will bring together the different actors that are involved with such a project. At the moment it is us, but when the funding runs out there is a question mark.</p>
<p>Civil society needs to stop kidding itself that it is not political and my question is what do we mean by political? There is political with a 'Large P' which is party political, and there is political with a 'small p' which is how do you get agreement on anything, political processes and compromise. And it seems to me that getting political with a 'large P' is dangerous territory and NGOs should not be going there, we don't have a mandate to do that. We are not journalists we are NGOs. We need to be able to defend ourselves and say we are not looking for political power, I'm doing it for helping my vision, fulfilling my values.</p>	<p>What I meant is that there is civil society and the politicians - they share the same client, the citizen, and they share the same product which is service delivery. That is what I mean when I say civil society is political, not inherently political in terms of lobbying for votes but we are people working towards the same outcomes. So from that perspective where we share the same clients, which is us, the people. It is everybody making sure they do their part to make sure the client is happy, so on that basis it is where civil society and government meet. But the driver of that client is the media, so we should fight for space in the media in terms of sharing the client and the product.</p>

6.3 Swazi students challenge African nations to embrace accountability⁸

Africa needs to usher in a cocktail of values if it is to realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), students from selected Swaziland schools have said. Addressing the PASA conference, five students from schools in Swaziland took turns present the values they believe would promote development in Africa.

The students addressed the importance, appreciation and relevance of the values to Swaziland and the rest of Africa. “In an accountable society, people are able to trust one another and this improves performance and stimulates partnering, which is tied to goal 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”, said Silindile Dlamini of St Theresa High School. Goal 17 focuses on strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development. Silindile challenged everyone to embrace accountability as it is the hallmark to development in society.

Making a presenting on transparency, Mandisa Shongwe of Swazi National High School believes that through transparency, SDGs 1, 2 and 4 will easily be achieved. The three SDGs refer to no poverty, zero hunger and quality education, respectively. He also commended some African governments for promoting openness in their countries and creating environments where people easily access information. “We have countries, including Swaziland, where Members or Parliament are mandated to declare assets before assuming public office. Another good example in Africa is former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan who openly declared his wealth before assuming office,” said Mandisa. She commended the Swaziland Government for fostering a culture of transparency by setting up the Public Accounts Committee which looks at how government officials behave, allowing the public to question decisions they make.

Siphosethu Ginindza of Swaziland National High School got resounding applause from the audience for highlighting practical issues affecting society each day. Making a presentation on citizen participation in governance matters, Siphosethu said fighting social injustices would create a participatory environment. Development is best achieved through involvement of youths, she said. “Development is a shared responsibility between government and the public. Communities need to be empowered as catalysts for community development. Involve youths and foster sports participation. One may ask why youths? Because they are critical thinkers, innovators, leaders of tomorrow and good communicators,” said Sipoethu.

The discussion could not be complete without a solid presentation on inclusion from Sibusiso Mabuza of Swazi National High School. He sees meaningful development taking place when the public is involved in government socio-economic processes irrespective of age, gender, race and colour.

“People of all ages, gender and race should be included in development and governance matters, socially and financially for development to be meaningful,” said Sipoethu.

Hosting the panel discussion, the eloquent and composed moderator of the discussion, Zinah Dos Santos of St Theresa High School challenged delegates to take the messages shared by the young presenters to their countries and ensure they are included in their plans and should not be ignored. He said, the buzz words for communities on the African continent should be accountability, inclusion, transparency and participation in order for development to take place.

⁸ This report was produced originally for the PASA blog (Accountability Times) and can be found at: <https://accountabilitytimes.wordpress.com/2016/10/18/swazi-students-challenge-african-nations-to-embrace-accountability/>

8. The Importance of Learning

How are different practitioners and researchers thinking about learning in relation to their social accountability work? How are we sharing our lessons as social accountability practitioners, and how can we continue to share lessons and experiences in a way that fosters learning? The conference hosted an informal learning session where participants were invited to share and reflect on different learning practices and experiences. The next section provides verbatim responses to some of the questions asked and debated during the learning session.

7.1 How do you define learning?

- So this is how we defined Learning: we said it is a continuous acquisition of knowledge, informal and formal. That is, you can acquire knowledge in an informal setup, that is not a classroom. You can acquire it through experience, adaptation to environment. And we said it enables one to improve and also provides growth.
- In my group we brainstormed and tried to get a different understanding of the word learning or how we understand learning on an individual level. So what we came up with was that **learning is acquiring new knowledge and skills in order to do things differently, or in order to do things better**. We actually went on to say that **when we learn we come out of our comfort zone in order to be open and accept new knowledge, new skills**. So that's one condition for us to be able to learn. We also went on to say that learning is also a discovery. It happens continuously and we continue to discover new things and that's how we learn in our lives. There was also an issue where we talked about our own egos - we have to let go of that in order to be able to learn. That's how we prepare ourselves for learning: **breaking down those barriers**.
- Is learning happening when you are learning the same things every day? That's the question that we posed, and the answer is this one: You can listen to the same thing many times but without learning takes place. One person said why do we sing the same song? When we listen to the song *Killing Me Softly*, it has a different meaning. So I said learning is contextual. And we said that this learning is continuous. Even if you listen to the same thing, you are learning, but in what condition, in what context?
- **Learning is first, a process. Second, learning happens in a number of ways** and learning itself is learning. That's what we said as a group. **It can happen accidentally, and incidentally**. If you've ever taken the chance to fall off a ladder or a step, you will learn. The next time, you will actually walk slowly. If you ever happen to step into a shower and turn the nozzle for the hot water and it burns you, you will learn. Next time, you'll be careful. If you ever happen to get to a conference like a Pan-African Social Accountability Conference to Learn and sit comfortably and listen, you will learn. And that is Applied Learning. Lastly, I will say, if you ever really try to assimilate and copy from what your colleague is doing and you keep pointing out and gaining new knowledge and it benefits you, you are learning. So as a group we are learning. And that is why learning is Learning.
- The best way of allowing somebody to learn is having them to experience. We also as a group agreed that learning only happens when someone has been totally transformed. If it's all just verbal information, then it's not complete. In this place, if we go out and nothing happens and we come back next year whether in Congo or wherever and nothing happens, then we are just wasting money for the donors. We need to see results. For us **it's about total transformation**.
- Our group decided that learning can come from manipulating the environment and getting the best out of it. **Learning can also be through experience**. We also discussed that **learning never ceases, we keep learning different things in life**.
- In our group, the main thing that we agreed on was in the **acquisition of knowledge**. Learning is the acquisition of knowledge to add to what you already know. Learning is not only an acquisition, but there's also action involved. **Learning involves you knowing what you didn't know before, and doing something differently from how you did it before**. So learning is not just passive it's also active. You have to move, you need to do something differently.
- **Learning is a continuous process of sharing and exchanging ideas, skills, expertise and it could be for good or wrong purposes**. We also said it is a lifelong process and we should be always willing to learn because we never reach the end of learning. The point is that it is continuous, there is no end.

7.2 How do we learn as individuals and organizations?

- We have discussed and agreed that learning, how we are learning, is a continuum and that continuum has **4 stages**. *The first stage is Passive Learning. The second stage is Active Learning. Active Learning is like we have come here, with a purpose to learn. The third level of Learning is Participatory. Where you use your motor nerves. You get involved. And the fourth is what we call Integrated Learning. It is the furthest end, sort of like at outcome level. So that is the continuum of learning and that is how we are learning and each one of us needs to identify at which level they are learning.*
- We learn as groups. *As we discuss and share as groups, we learn.* And also as peers we get to interact and learn a lot. Asking questions is another way. If one is able to explore new ideas and new things. If one is open to discussion then they are able to explore new ideas and get to know other things. Being courageous is also another way of learning. If one stays indoors and doesn't interact with others one may find it difficult to learn. The other question was how do we learn then, is **through observations**. Some may be difficult to share but we experienced them and that is learning. Some say experience is the best teacher. So if you do things over and over again you will get to know new things through practice.
- There are two levels we looked at as a group. *You can do learning in the context of the individual or you can do learning in the context of an organisation.* But in the context of an individual, there is a likelihood to link the individual to an organisation. So we basically coiled our responses and crafted them to fit in the context of an organisation. So how are we following learning as an organisation. We either follow learning as an organisation in a positive or a negative way. There are negative things that happen in an organisation and we pick positive learnings from it. And there are contexts and things that happen in a positive way, but individuals still choose to see negative things.
- We learn through sharing experience and skills. *We also learn through actions and reflections*, especially adult learning. Adults learn through actions like role-playing etc. We also learn through reflections because you may continue to make one and the same mistake but if you do not reflect, you might not learn that you are making a mistake. *We also learn through Learning Labs*. We also learn through social media. We also learn through peer to peer as individuals and with other organisations.



PASA delegates during the site visit at Lomagengane



A community member explains the impact of the CVA project on the Mantambe Primary School

7.3 What prevents us from learning as individuals and organizations?

- One: **fear for the outcomes of learning**. Sometimes we have a fear of what I might learn, it's sort of presumptuous. Secondly, is **selective attention**. So sometimes you want to learn only what you have purposed. [For example] I can see you but I choose to see what is behind you. The third reason why sometimes we don't learn is the interest. **Sometimes we don't want to learn**. We also said the **failure to unlearn is another reason**. **Some of us are too rigid that we are not willing to delete and download the files that run. We just want to file and file and file until the inbox is full. And sometimes at organisational level there is absence of learning opportunities**. Then finally we said the **lack of capacity** at organisation level is why we are not able to learn.
- It can be your environment. It can either be at work or at home. **If you don't have support from your boss or your life partner, that environment itself can be a barrier to learning new things. And also some culture. Women aren't even allowed to stand in front of men like I'm doing, and share. And as a woman then that takes away the opportunity to share and to learn in the process. Circumstances can be a barrier to learning. Also, investment and allocating resources to support yourself to grow**, both at an individual and organisational level. Also, as an individual, you need to be willing. It's not just children who don't like reading, even adults don't like reading, so you have to be willing to get to know things.
- We identified one critical factor: if what is taken as learning does not contribute to learning, then it affects learning.
- Our 2 points were: Attitude; **sometimes there's attitudes**, concentration and other things in our minds. Secondly, sometimes it's about not wanting to learn.
- As some of the other groups discovered, maybe the environment isn't as friendly. You could discover that you have a boss or an organisation that is just not well-equipped for learning, they discourage learning. **As individuals sometimes we can be very passive, sometimes we're not conscious that we're learning**. Sometimes it is beyond us to implement the things that we're learning. We may not be cognizant that we are learning and are not willing to change the ways that we do things.
- **The lack of champions that will lead processes, hence there will be no learning**. You will also find that there is lack of budget for staff development so you'll find people just sitting and not learning. Also, as an individual, if you lack planning, you may fail to learn because you must plan to learn. **So poor planning can also prevent you from learning**.
- **Openness, or lack of openness can be a barrier to learning**. We all come from different part of the continent, we all have different experiences of our work but there are common themes that run across, so we need to be more open about our experiences of these different themes. So we can all feed into one big lesson that we can take back to all our colleagues and communities to apply the lessons that we learned here. So lack of openness and **lack of reflection**.



PASA delegates engage with each other during the Marketplace Gallery which allowed organization representatives to share their work and their experiences

9. The Way Forward

How can we continue to share our experiences, lessons and innovations in implementing social accountability in our contexts with each other on a continuous basis without having to wait for the next Learning Lab or meeting? This section of the report is a summary of comments made during the final plenary. These are not verbatim responses, but paraphrased summaries of what was said by delegates.

8.1 How will you turn practical lessons from PASA into strategic thinking and action within your organization?

The community must take ownership of the problem and identify what needs to be done and take the leading role in action planning.

We should partner with communities for action, networking and planning. The community does identification and we only partner with them as implementing organisations.

We must create platforms for dialogue and engagement. We don't talk for communities, allow them to voice out their concerns. We don't speak for them we create the platform [for them to speak out].

Create M&E tools on two levels – at community level where the project is being implemented, and second level is where the organization/donor does their M&E as an external partner.

Social accountability practitioners should turn aid to the benefit of the communities. There are areas where we could bring much more effective programming with the funds from donors.

As practitioners there should be a consultative processes that come before the donor or implementer tells communities what they are doing, communities should be the ones to prioritize.

CVA is a model that is being used effectively at the local level but at the national and district level we don't see the effective utilization of the model, so perhaps when we get home we lobby for the use of the CVA by the government and other partners.

Through a clear analysis of what our quick wins would be in our own contexts.

We need to make sure we develop clear indicators for ownership, what does ownership look like, does coming to a meeting translate to ownership?

By developing indicators for responsible citizenry.

By unpacking the meaning of the word 'voice'. What does people having a voice look like?

I've been inspired by use of media and will try to use interactive media where citizens can suggest accountability

It seems that youth don't have a say in budgeting at government level, and so don't participate, so I think that strengthening the involvement of all stakeholders can improve participation.

I am going to strengthen our relationships, and ensure the utilization of traditional structures to promote meaningful and sustainable community participation in the budget process.

By strengthening the two-way approach of communication (top-down and bottom-up) to ensure that social accountability initiatives are implemented in a comprehensive manner.

We should promote a multi-sectoral approach so as to create a good platform for us to learn from each other. We need to create time to learn from each other.

Sustainability is important to be conscious of in the long term success of our work, and we need to consider it at the beginning of any process.

8.2 How can we continue to share with each other and continue to learn from each other?

We can create networks and spaces to share lessons we learnt and best practices.

We can create networks at 3 levels: local networks, regional networks (across SADC), and international networks.

If there are networks already existing it is important to strengthen those.

Create a website that can effectively communicate with the rest of the partnership.

We can create networks and spaces to share lessons we learnt and best practices.

We can create networks at 3 levels: local networks, regional networks (across SADC), and international networks.

By creating manuals and tools that are easy to use and accessible to not only us, but also to government stakeholders and also communities that we work in.

Translating manuals into local languages with infographics that are easy to read so they can engage and speak about what they are reading in their own communities.

If there are networks already existing it is important to strengthen those.

Create a website that can effectively communicate with the rest of the partnership.

We need to establish or strengthen the community of practice in Africa and within the different countries themselves.

Creating and striking partnerships with those here and within our own countries.

Strengthening COPSAM [the community of practice website: www.copsam.com]

Create an electronic platform to upload experiences to share with others.

Use social media and link with organisations that are using social media. Use Twitter and Facebook to drive messages and make it accessible to people we are targeting.

Webinars.

The rotation of meetings in terms of place, but also across organisations, so that we share tools and experiences that transcend organisations and help build the sector.



For more information about the work that PSAM does, please contact us:

Physical Address: 16B Prince Alfred Street, Rhodes University, Grahamstown

Postal Address: PO Box 94, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, 6140

Email : psam-admin@ru.ac.za

Tel : 046 603 8358

Fax : 046 603 7578

Website: www.psam.org.za

Connect with us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/publicserviceaccountabilitymonitor>

Find us on Twitter: [@Right_to_SAM](https://twitter.com/Right_to_SAM)



Pan African
Social Accountability
— learning lab **2016**