

ACCOUNTABILITY TOP TO BOTTOM: THE VOICES DEMAND

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Country: Zambia

Sector: Education

"If we had known this before we would have done things differently. Thanks to SNV, our eyes have been opened, now we know and we have changed. SNV showed us where to start and we are changing"

Mrs. Margaret Phiri, Head Teacher, Soft Katongo

CHALLENGE

Inefficient and ineffective allocation of financial and human resources to the service delivery interface, combined with imprudent use of resources that do arrive, are some of the sores that still have to be addressed by education service providers in Zambia, especially in the Ministry of Education. In 2003 The pronouncement of free basic education came as a great relief to the majority of Zambian parents who could not afford to pay school requisites, However, implementation of the policy has led to different interpretations among duty bearers and service recipients alike. One question asked by both sides is, "how free is the free education?" What started to be free is less and less free. Moreover, the quality of what is touted as free has fallen year by year. In the last two years schools have received only one or two allocations of funds per year instead of the expected quarterly disbursements. While the parents did not know whom to ask why their children were not learning, those at the service delivery point looked to their seniors for information on when the next allocation of funds would reach them. All were frustrated in their quest for information. One technocrat said *"You know, the process of service delivery is complicated, the community members may not understand"*. In a culture where demanding for accountability is not the norm and where people traditionally do not question their elders, chiefs or others regarded as higher in hierarchy or power structure, accessing answers to legitimate questions is a real challenge for communities and District Education Boards alike.

CLIENTS

SNV trained Kasama Christian Community Care (KCCC), a local capacity builder, on Resource Tracking and Community Scorecard as accountability tools. KCCC is in turn implementing and rolling-out the tools at community level. This sub-contracting arrangement has stimulated demand for accountability and is enhancing effective community participation and articulation of demand for delivery of quality education services. In Nakonde District, Action Aid Zambia has been a close partner in the implementation of Community Scorecard in 19 schools in three wards. They supported the community costs and are conducting frequent follow-ups to schools to ensure implementation of action plans that were developed by Parents Teachers Associations. World Vision has lately come on board in Kasama District to take up community costs in two wards. SNV has also worked with Caritas Mpika in providing KCCC with capacity in resource tracking.

METHOD / SNV INTERVENTION

But... is there a way out?

Concerned by the still pathetic situation of education service delivery in basic education in four districts in Zambia's Northern Province, and eager to establish a foundation for improved learning achievement in the province, SNV identified and

adapted accountability tools - the Community Scorecard and Resource Tracking tools that have worked in the unique local context. The community score card is a monitoring and evaluation approach that enables beneficiary community members to assess service providers and to rate their input and services/performance using a grading system in the form of scores. The scores obtained are used to trigger dialogue and reflection for public accountability between the service provider and the beneficiary community for further service delivery improvement. The community understands the mechanism and has used it to begin to demand their entitlements and better quality service delivery. Because the community scorecard collects data, it has been useful in putting pressure on under-performing public bodies through better use of information and evidence. So far community scorecard training has been piloted in four wards within two districts. The biggest breakthroughs are in the four wards in Kasama and Nakonde Districts.

OUTCOME

So.....What are the voices saying?

The community members have realized that they must determine the course of their children's destinies by changing the quality of education their children receive.

During the training the Community Members gained understanding of the immense power they wield to effectively and meaningfully participate in important decision making processes by articulating and demanding for their rights. For instance, in Nakonde District, after the PTA was equipped with these skills, the District Education Board was held accountable and responded quickly to demand by



Head teacher, Soft Katongo basic presents PTA scores on Inputs

posting 5 teachers to two different schools that had been without teachers, one for about a year and another for the last six months. These schools have a combined pupil population of 800. The advocacy to the District Education Office for posting of teachers was led by the Ward Councilor who was part of the Community Scorecard Training. In Kasama District the community demanded the replacement of eight teachers who were transferred at one go from one school without replacement.

Collective voice is growing more powerful and becoming more articulate with improved access to better information. Using the input tracking scorecard, some Parents Teachers Associations from different schools calculated that in 2009, out



PTA Chair presents their evaluation of teachers and community performance

of the money disbursed by the Ministry of Education, investment in each child was less than US\$ 0.5 per year. Their new capacity to use information to provide evidence such has taken the Ministry by storm. It is hoped that positive action will be taken to change the system for disbursement of financial resources to schools across the District. Indeed the pupils have also begun to hold their teachers accountable by letting them know that they miss out when teachers

absent themselves from class. The teachers and the Ministry of Education staff at the provincial and district levels now realise that community members understand

IMPACT

the education delivery system in the country and how the system has not been able to meet the mantra "education for all". They appreciate that challenges from community members will continue as more members of the community are empowered and equipped with the knowledge needed to articulate their demands for quality services and allocation of resources designated to reach their children in schools.

At the conclusion of one training session, the teachers who participated said, *"If all Parents Teachers Associations (PTA) and communities get this kind of empowerment, teachers will have no alternative but to change and provide quality education as parents become aware of the quality of education their children are entitled to. Those who cannot perform will have to opt out. The government will be forced to release the required resources at the right time due to pressure from the communities. On the other hand, with increased engagement of communities in monitoring the learning of their children learning outcomes will improve."* The realization that their service delivery is under scrutiny, will be scored and openly discussed made them realize the high stakes in good performance.

What changes?

More than 8,500 pupils in 23 schools, 136 teachers, 140 Parents Teachers Association members, 20 board members and ministry staff are benefitting from improved accountability. SNV capacity development services have built their confidence and encouraged them to demand the services and explanations that are their right. Our local capacity builder now has strengthened expertise and, with resources, is capable of organising more support to more service recipients to voice their demands to receive better quality services. In the 23 schools where awareness has been raised, there is a demonstrated improvement in learning and teaching.

The training has triggered establishment of advocacy platforms. Pupil/teacher contact hours have increased and parents now monitor teacher absenteeism. Community members have become more involved by ensuring that their children do all the homework given by the teachers and that the books are marked. This has resulted in increased learning achievement, progression and retention rates for pupils. The pupils are now accessing better education services, especially the 800 pupils from the two schools in Nakonde District who missed out on learning for close to one year due to lack of teachers.

The Ministry has realised that the communities know about and will demand resources allocated to schools from the national budget. This will stir transparency and accountability from top Ministry officials to the frontline service providers and parents. The culture of silence due to hierarchy is slowly but surely beginning to wane. As one teacher put it,

"change begins from the heart and we have begun changing very rapidly, we have started from inside the classroom coming outwards". It is already proven that empowered community members have ample capacity to understand education delivery systems, if the information is put in a simple and clear language.

Collectively, they are able to identify bottlenecks that constrain progress and arrive at local solutions to address them. For instance, sanitation is a major issue in many schools. Parents have decided to construct new toilets or fix what is available to acceptable standards to improve the learning environment. Empowered communities are ready to participate meaningfully in delivery of quality education. In two schools parents have negotiated with school neighbours who have piped water to extend the supply to the schools. They bear the cost and

ITEM	2009		2010		AMOUNT REC'D	AMOUNT SP.
	BUDGET	ACTUAL	BUDGET	ACTUAL		
Relocation of 1 x 0 classroom and design	K130,000	K130,000	K130,000	K130,000		
Construction of Staff Pt latrine at school						
Educational Materials - Stationery - Paper - Books - Books for sale	K100,000	K100,000	K100,000	K100,000		
Preventive maintenance - Book sale - School surroundings	K100,000	K100,000	K100,000	K100,000		
San / JET / WATER HYGIENE WATER	K100,000	K100,000	K100,000	K100,000		
PERSONAL Security Guard	K100,000	K100,000	K100,000	K100,000		
Production UNIT - Fuel - Other	K100,000	K100,000	K100,000	K100,000		

Budget tracking scorecard by PTA

continue to pay the bills. Some have built classroom blocks without the support of the government while others purchase text books for their children and employ security guards for the schools.

Parents and teachers from a school that had acute shortage of teaching staff organized themselves to employ three assistant teachers to bridge the gap while they continue to demand that the ministry fulfils its obligation to deploy qualified teachers to the schools. Community members contribute over US\$1 per household per term towards the teachers costs. To curb pupil absenteeism, the parents are more engaged in ensuring that children attend school, complete homework assignments, and attend school open days. In one school their exam pass rate at grade 9 improved from 3 pupils to 23 pupils within one year. The district and provincial education offices have recognized the capacity of the community to participate in education service delivery and appreciate it.

“Teacher, are we not starting with our reading under the tree today? Grade 1 pupil asks her teacher who has reported to school late.

LESSONS LEARNED

With a vigilant and knowledgeable community coupled with facts and information generated from the community scorecard process, accountability can be realised at all levels of the service delivery chain.



PTA/Teachers' Interface meeting resolutions

The interface meeting that brings the service providers and service recipients together to discuss the quality of services has created a powerful forum for making important joint resolutions for improved learning outcomes. This has resulted in various actions and commitments to achieve common goals to benefit the learner. There is evident unity of purpose and developing coherence among the stakeholders.

The communities have realised that although they must hold service bearers accountable for the policy of free basic education they cannot afford to sit and wait in 'anticipation' but remain engaged and provide what they can for quality education of their children.

Critical success moments

Partnership with Action Aid Zambia in supporting community costs has been very critical in rolling out the program to reach more beneficiaries and take it to scale. The swiftness of KCCC has been instrumental in helping the community to internalise and practically apply the concepts that have given birth to voices that are now demanding for accountability from the top to the bottom.

Replication and localisation

The ability to replicate the community score card tool to stimulate accountability and transparency has been tried and tested and it proves fairly easy to do. Based on these findings, local Zambian organisations like Development Organisation for People's Empowerment (DOPE) have asked for support for scaling up to more wards. Action Aid Zambia and World Vision International have confirmed their community sponsorship for six more wards in 2011.

- PP days as at August 2010 - 85