

SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY PLATFORM

FOR

LOCAL GOVERNANCE PERFORMANCE IN GHANA PROJECT

Policy Paper

**Advancing Social Accountability
in Social Protection and
Socio-Economic Interventions:
The Ghana School Feeding Programme**

Contributed by:
Esther Ofei-Aboagye (PhD)
December, 2013

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| Acronym | Entity |
|----------------|--|
| CAADP | Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme |
| CHRAJ | Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice |
| CSOs | Civil Society Organisations |
| DIC | District Implementation Committee |
| ECASARD | Ecumenical Association for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development |
| GIFMIS | Ghana Integrated Financial Management Information System |
| GNAT | Ghana National Association of Teachers |
| GSFP | Ghana School Feeding Programme |
| ICSO | Independent Civil Society Organizations |
| MDGs | Millennium Development Goals |
| NAGRAT | National Association of Graduate Teachers |
| NCCE | National Commission for Civic Education |
| NDPC | National Development Planning Commission |
| PCD | Partnership for Child Development |
| SAP | Social Accountability Project |
| SIC | School Implementation Committee |
| SMC | School Management Committee |
| SNV | Netherlands Development Organisation |
| TEWU | Teachers and Educational Workers Union |
| WFP | World Food Programme |
| ZUTA | Zonal/urban/town/area |



Accountability Concepts and Application in Ghana

The late 1980s and 1990s witnessed the evolution of various aspects and concepts related to sustainability in the development discourse. Apart from the ideas around the environment, natural resources and physical development, good governance issues attracted considerable discussion, conceptualization and promotion. Accountability, or the obligation of power-holders to account for or take responsibility for their actions and the entitlement of citizens and rights-holders to enquire about the application of resources or actions taken on their behalf, was a key discussion point.

Accountability is about answerability by duty-bearers and enforceability of clear provisions for sanctioning failure to be accountable (Goetz & Jenkins, 2005). To these ends, mechanisms by which individuals and organisations can safely and legitimately report concerns for redress must be in place. Accountability requires openness of the system, clear processes and procedures, access to public information and awareness in the public service for information-sharing. Other requirements include stakeholder involvement and a learning orientation to monitoring and evaluation.

In the Ghanaian context, the 1992 Constitution affords various opportunities for accountability. Amongst others, the Directive Principles of State Policy indicate in Article 35, Clause 6d of Constitution requires “the state to make democracy a reality by decentralizing the administrative and financial machinery of government to the regions and districts to afford all possible opportunities to the people to participate in decision-making at every level in national life”. Article 162, Clause 5 requires agencies of the media to uphold the responsibility and accountability of government to the people. Articles 218 to 220 set out the functions of the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) to provide channels for redress at the national, regional and district levels. Article 233 indicates the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE)’s duty to create awareness amongst citizens of their civic responsibilities and rights. Article 240 provides the features of decentralization and local government which point to accountability.

Ghanaian public programmes require monitoring and reporting along the chain of authority therefore, officials subject themselves to reviews and submit regular reports. These include auditing, financial accounting, adherence to administrative requirements, rules and regulations. Though challenged by report production capacities, access of the public to information and sanctions for non-performance, this supply side accountability is largely available.

For accountability to work, the citizenry must be able to engage duty-bearers on their interests and have the relevant information, contacts and other capacities to track performance. This was made abundantly clear in the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation (Arusha, Tanzania, 1990). This involves demand-side accountability by which citizens maintain an interaction with office-holders or duty bearers, looking at processes, the results and the effectiveness of decisions and interventions.. It is in this context that social accountability is important.

Social accountability relates to systems that allow citizens and organizations that represent their interests (civil society organizations) to participate in decisions and processes for resource allocation. Social accountability involves data collection and processing, preferably with the involvement of the principals, and must take place at all levels including the community. Social accountability is relevant if people find the processes inclusive, accessible, s accessible and their conclusions representative of their opinions.

Therefore, social accountability involves tools that would be useful for participatory planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluations. Tools include budget analysis, social audits, tracking, community score/voice cards, report cards, mappings, scorings, rankings and citizens' assessments of service delivery to measure levels of satisfaction. Interactive and dialoguing events such as town-hall meetings, focus group discussions, citizens' juries, parent-teacher meetings and public assemblies also increase social accountability.

These instruments have been used in the Ghanaian public sector including the introduction of citizens' charters in the health sector. Annual stakeholder meetings have been held in the health, water and education sectors at district, regional and national levels. Citizens' score card studies have been administered in the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) and by the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) District Oversight Committee. NCCCE has undertaken social auditing initiatives and the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) employs focus group discussions to collect data for its reporting. On a national scale, the Ministry of Finance has invited civil society to submit inputs into national budget preparation processes and the non-state sector is involved in monitoring the implementation of the decentralization policy.

On the supply side, Government has made increased efforts to solicit the inputs of private sector and the public in the preparation of national budgets and to some extent, reviews of implementation. The government's adoption of the Ghana Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS) is intended to promote demand side accountability.

Development Partners (DPs) and international development organizations have supported efforts to build the relevant capacity amongst citizens and the demand side to take up available opportunities. The support initiatives

include the Non-State Actors and Local Authorities in Development Programme supported by the European Union for social accountability and the Land, Services and Citizenship Project assisted by Cities Alliance and implemented by Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD), German Technical Assistance (GIZ), People’s Dialogue (an urban-oriented NGO) and the Institute of Local Government Studies (ILGS). Some initiatives are regionally-located such as the Local Governance and Decentralization Program (LOGODEP) supported by USAID to expand public participation in local governance in the Western Region. The Inlucity Project implemented in the Accra and Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assemblies by Global Communities and its partners has similar objectives.

As Ghana develops and initiates pro-poor national programmes on a country-wide scale, with key roles for different sectors and actors at the national, regional and district levels, how can true responsiveness to programmes’ intended beneficiaries be ensured? Who should be involved in exacting answerability? This paper examines these issues by reflecting on advancing social accountability in social protection and socio-economic interventions using the Ghana School Feeding Programme as a case study.

The Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP)

The Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) began in 2005 as a ten-school pilot intervention aimed at improving enrolment, increasing domestic food production and enhancing household incomes and food security in deprived communities in the country. The programme was designed in the context of the third pillar of the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) and also influenced by national commitments to the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) relating to poverty reduction.

As the programme evolved, the basic concept of SFP was outlined as to provide children in public primary schools and kindergartens with one hot adequately nutritious meal, prepared from locally grown foodstuffs on every school going day (GSFP District Operations Manual, 2009). The programme had the immediate objectives of contributing to increases in school enrolment, attendance and retention; reducing short-term hunger and malnutrition amongst kindergarten and primary school children; and boosting domestic food production. In the long-term, it was envisaged that the programme would contribute to poverty reduction and improvements in food security.

The institutional framework of the programme has MLGRD as the supervising Ministry with policy direction provided by a Programme Steering Committee and day-to-day implementation undertaken by the GSFP National Secretariat. The Technical Ministries (of Local Government and Rural Development, Health, Education, Food

and Agriculture and Gender, Children and Social Protection and others) are included in the Programme Steering Committee. At the regional level, the programme is implemented by Regional Coordinators and Monitors reporting to the National Secretariat and collaborating with the Regional Coordinating Councils.

At the district level, there is a District Implementation Committee (DIC) providing oversight and coordinated by a District GSFP Desk Officer, supported by the Assemblies. The DIC includes technical heads of participating sector agencies but also has representation from the assemblies' social services sub-committee, traditional rulers and opinion leaders. At the local level, the School Implementation Committee (SIC) oversees implementation and is chaired by the representative of the Parent-Teacher-Association and includes the girls' and boys' school prefects. Other collaborators include external support agencies, beneficiary communities and civil society organizations.

Over the years, the criteria for the selection of beneficiary schools was developed from the more obvious features of low school enrolment, attendance and retention, particularly for girls; high drop-out rates; low literacy levels; high hunger and vulnerability status; and poor access to potable water. Other important considerations that came to be included were high communal spirit or community management capability, willingness of the community to put up basic infrastructure (including kitchens, storerooms and latrines) and to contribute in cash or kind.

After five years of implementation, the lessons learned were becoming clearer. There had been some achievements including increases in enrolment, some usage of local foodstuffs and some linkages to farmers. About 80% of participating caterers had been trained in relation to the Programme and increased school attendance and retention was observed.

The challenges included poor targeting of beneficiary schools and persistent concerns about linkages to local farmers and the ability to spend feeding costs in the locality.

A series of reforms were introduced, including refining the targeting criteria with the assistance of the World Bank and the World Food Programme, using poverty rankings, food consumption scores, Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Assessments, spatial data variables, the average share of national poverty and food insecurity per district and allocations of resources across districts using average shares.

Re-targeting of beneficiary schools was undertaken and the programme was up-scaled in 2011. Other important innovations were in improving communication and information-dissemination throughout the programme, management capacity, documentation and outreach to the public. A pilot social accountability project was also undertaken and is discussed in the next section of this paper.

An evaluation of the first phase was undertaken with support from the Dutch Government. The World Food Programme (WFP), Partnership for Child Development (PCD) and other development partners supported the

institutionalization of a monitoring and evaluation framework and thematic consultants in agriculture and other critical areas.

Between 2010 and 2012, various pilot initiatives were undertaken. Apart from the social accountability initiative, the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) pioneered the implementation of the Home-Grown School Feeding Model and Procurement Governance. Partnership for Child Development (PCD) with support from Dubai Cares promoted school health as well as the conduct of baseline and impact assessment studies. Other interventions of interest included the Purchase for Progress initiative (helping the farmers to grow items for use in the SFP). Other notable efforts were undertaken by international NGOs like World Vision International and local organizations like the Ecumenical Association for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (ECASARD).

Informed by these learning experiences, the strategic principles of the Programme came to include decentralized implementation, community participation and collaboration with CSOs, media and the private sector. The District Operations Manual was produced which set out the history, conceptual framework and objectives of the Programme. Other aspects were the role and responsibilities of key actors including the national secretariat, district assemblies, district desk officer, the district and school implementation committees, the beneficiary schools and the caterers. The third part provided valuable information on hygiene relating to the kitchen, personal and food aspects. It outlined the requirements for an adequate and nutritionally balanced meal, safety in the kitchen and accident management and terms of caterer contracts. Thus, the stage for social accountability was set.

From the foregoing, it is evident that a lot of effort had gone into reviewing and strengthening school feeding. However, the focus had largely been on the service delivery and management aspects rather than what recipients could contribute to strengthening the Programme. With its multi-objective, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral orientation, SFP required effective accountability at all levels. This would enable national, regional and local actors in the public, non-governmental, civil society and private sectors to understand the distribution of obligations and expected benefits as well as their relationships in ensuring the success of such a social intervention. The next section considers efforts by non-state stakeholders to assess the programme and promote social accountability.

Social Accountability Efforts in the Ghana School Feeding Programme

Prior to the extensive Social Accountability Project (SAP) undertaken as a collaborative effort between the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV) and the Ghana School Feeding Programme in 2010 to 2012, organizations interested in social protection, poverty reduction and local level development undertook activities with relevance to social accountability. The following section discusses two of such efforts by SEND Foundation, a West Africa-based NGO and the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT).

As part of its pro-poor policy advocacy, SEND Foundation Ghana in 2008 and 2009 undertook studies to review GSFP using the report card method, resulting in two publications. The first was titled “Whose Decision Counts” and the second, “Challenges of Institutional Collaboration”. The studies noted earlier efforts at contributing to exacting accountability by civil society organizations including a consultation organized by Ghanaian and Dutch CSOs in 2008 and commentary on school feeding by the media. The SEND study employed participatory monitoring and evaluation with its regional and national networks to monitor public policies, share policy information, demand accountability and lobby for policy reform. Research was undertaken in four (4) regions working through its district monitoring committees and local NGO partners. The regions were the Greater Accra, Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions.

The institutional collaboration study employed the SEND Ghana School Feeding Complementary Service Assessment (SF CSA) Index. Conducted in 21 districts, grassroots civil society actors collected data to assess the state of activities and inputs from such institutions as the Ministries of Education, Food and Agriculture, Health and the Assemblies. It established that though the Programme was appreciated, the complementary services required to deliver it effectively were absent. The state of education support was half of the expected levels; the state of basic infrastructure low; and agricultural involvement, very low. Poor knowledge of the policy by stakeholders, unclear definition of roles, weak coordination and oversight were some of the institutional concerns. Earlier studies had identified inequity of distribution of beneficiary schools, ineffective decision-making, financial sustainability concerns, over-politicisation, location of ministerial oversight responsibility, the status of stakeholder participation and collaboration, amongst others.

In 2011, the Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT) developed a series of position papers for advocacy purposes with support from Education International. The position papers set out teachers’ ideas about some of the challenges besetting education in Ghana and their recommendations. One of these areas was the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP). The teachers concluded that the programme’s intent was laudable and had

both positive and negative effects. The positive aspects were the increases in school enrolment, retention of learners particularly girls, decreases in absenteeism and the assurance of at least one meal a day for beneficiaries. However, there were concerns about disruptions in contact time, pressure on school infrastructure and logistics from the increases in enrolment, the use of pupils' labour and the challenges to hygiene. Other issues related to the prospects for political interference, lack of inclusion of certain key stakeholders and tracking financial outlays.

GNAT considered that the needed to be sustainable and expanded to cover all pupils. To this end, the organisation recommended the institution of a proper legal framework, strengthening through an intergovernmental framework and assured funding for the programme. Other recommendations related to proper contracting of caterers or matrons, cost-effectiveness through proper storage and bulk procurement of food items and stronger and more regular reporting. GNAT also recommended taking cognizance of the infrastructural challenges that the Programme posed through increases in enrolment; and the need to de-politicise the programme through greater CSO involvement. . The paper indicated that parties such as GNAT, TEWU, NAGRAT, faith-based organizations at all levels of government and the key stake-holding organizations should be encouraged to seek accountability within appropriate regulations, a policy framework and a law.

SAP and the ICSO M&E Programme

School feeding witnessed various innovations in 2011 including a programme up-scale and the initiation of a novel social accountability effort, the Social Accountability Project (SAP) which was undertaken with technical and financial support by SNV. The project's aim was to increase Ghanaian society's ownership of and responsiveness of GSFP by ensuring transparent implementation in line with agreed and documented policies and strategies that pursue efficiency and value for money, thereby reaching a maximum number of people in the agreed target.

Given this context, the Programme was concerned with the extent to which duty bearers met their responsibility to be accountable to beneficiaries; as well as the degree to which beneficiaries were aware of their rights to hold duty-bearers accountable and actually exercised these rights. The impact areas that the SAP was intended to affect included information-sharing mechanisms as well as public understanding of budget allocation, expenditure, asset management, monitoring and decision-making related to the programme. Other areas were the responsiveness of management and accountability systems to bottom-up participatory feedback and capacity building for GSFP staff and officials of collaborating ministries in social accountability concepts, tools and mechanisms.

A major component of this project was the Independent Civil Society Organizations Monitoring and Evaluation (ICSO M and E) which was implemented in sixty-nine (69) districts. It involved CSOs coordinating and facilitating sub-district platforms known as zonal-urban-town-area (ZUTA) forums, where citizens could interact with other

stakeholders in school feeding on resources, processes and constraints to delivery (SNV Ghana, 2010).

ZUTA council forums brought together GSFP stakeholders in the catchment or administrative area together every quarter to discuss arising issues. They consisted of representatives/ members of Unit Committees, ZUTAs, the Assembly and Parliament. Other participants were representatives of DICs, CSOs, SICs and PTAs and the local executives of political parties active in the area.

Since GSFP was already considered prone to partisan influences and political manipulation, the involvement of political party representatives was rather contentious for some observers. However, the programme designers indicated that the considerable influence that these local representatives wielded had to be openly acknowledged, harnessed and aligned with the needs and interests of other citizens to positively influence local feeding programmes.

The project also generated a lot of critical documentation including:

- a Social Accountability Manual
- a Social Accountability Tool Kit for District Level Monitoring
- an extensive Baseline Survey and an Impact Assessment
- Quarterly programme newsletters (ICSO M and E Updates, 2010/11).

The programme built a network of CSOs with capacities in social accountability in local governance-related undertakings. Extensive media outreach was undertaken and considerable public education provided.

Some of the achievements from the perspective of the Project's stakeholders are presented below (Ofei-Aboagye, 2011).

From the implementers' perspective, SAP helped in training and capacitating communities for ownership of GSFP, although the ZUTA forums needed to be consolidated as a strategic intervention. The programme prioritized information sharing, presentation and discussion of the baseline findings, training of ZUTA forum members on social accountability and supporting them to take action and efforts to sustain the forums beyond the project phase. Project-end figures showed that turn-out at ZUTA meetings had been appreciable, although the representation of women was rather low. A total of 2122 members received training on SA tools and mechanisms.

The intervention was generally well received and non-beneficiary communities expressed interest in being equipped for social accountability. Communities had taken an interest in the quantity and quality of school feeding meals and observed that these were affected by late financial transfers. Each ZUTA forum had come up with at

least one follow-up action including stronger and more regular information-sharing on GSFP, monitoring-related activities, and stakeholder education on roles and social accountability. Others actions related to improving farmer-caterer relationships, renovating kitchens and educating PTAs on GSFP.

Some conclusions from the community level were that the amounts paid to caterers for each child needed to be reviewed. There were still perceptions of politicisation and partisanship and this impeded equitable access. More involvement of community members and stronger commitment of desk officers were required.

One key concern that emerged from the experiences of participants related to the ZUTA membership. While the project had defined the membership, local realities had led to differing interpretations. For instance, a clear ceiling had to be established for membership in order for ZUTAs to be more manageable.

While meetings were well attended, there were concerns about lateness. Some transport support would also be required in cases where members travel some distance to meetings. Assemblies should therefore be required to create budget lines to sustain these forums for social accountability. Assemblies also need to be sensitized about the importance of these forums not only for school feeding but other social protection and socio-economic interventions. Good practices generated in the project included successful negotiations with the assemblies to provide transport support to ZUTA Forums and the caterers willing to provide refreshments in the Ashanti Region.

A question emerged about the role of community-level CSOs and individuals in initiating social accountability-related actions. ICSO utilised the services of larger, region-based NGOs not necessarily resident in the localities (therefore to some extent, outsiders) and this raised questions of ownership.

An independent assessment of the ICSO M&E process was built into the project design to be undertaken alongside its implementation. The assessment focused on sustainability, scale up of gains, integration into district systems and processes and the way forward. The independent assessment indicated that some regions, e.g. Volta Region, enjoyed more significant successes with the ZUTA Forums and community engagement.

The independent assessment also examined the perceptions of some key stakeholders who were not necessarily provided roles in the school feeding arrangements, DIC, SICs or the ZUTA forum memberships. These included district coordinating directors (DCDs) and presiding members (PMs) who were also leaders at the district level and therefore key to sustainability in social accountability.

These parties were largely aware of SAP and considered it laudable. However, while CSOs had been instrumental in promoting social accountability, their involvement needed to be more structured. There was the danger that

the role of communities in initiating social accountability would be overshadowed or under-developed. It was suggested that the CSOs could be charged with auditing different levels of programme implementation higher than the community and also deployed to examine specific, more technical or sectoral aspects – such as the impacts on education, health and nutritional status or where they had capacities.

There were concerns that the programme did not sufficiently engage or inform Presiding Members and Assembly sub-committees such as Finance and Administration. The ongoing engagement and involvement of the PM, district administration staff and assembly members was seen as critical to ensuring school feeding concerns were mainstreamed in the district budget, especially with the practice of composite budgeting.

Curiously, district directors of education and members of the social services sub-committees of assemblies who are supposed to members of the DICs indicated that they were not sufficiently knowledgeable about SFP in their districts. This supported the idea that several DICs were not sufficiently active.

District Directors of Education (DDE) indicated some understanding of social accountability but made limited mention of the roles of CSOs and NGOs in these processes. Even though they recognised entities such as DICs, SMCs, PTAs and Heads of Schools as key in ensuring accountability, they were concerned about the influence that clearly partisan actors like DCEs and political party executives could have.

Achievements, Challenges and Lessons for Social Accountability

The intervention had various achievements. These included better involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of the Programme resulting in an improved understanding of school feeding and accountability obligations. DICs and SICs became more active in participating districts and members of these bodies suggested that they had gained greater clarity about the roles of various parties. Communities were also more interested and demonstrated this by contributing food items, water, firewood, utensils and other inputs as well as honouring invitations to participate in forums and related events.

Given the improved information flow, there were opportunities to explain the purpose of the re-targeting exercise (which involved taking the programme away from some schools and communities) and strengthen linkages between schools, caterers and farmers. In some communities, an environment was created in which discussions could be held devoid of politics.

However, it was evident that social accountability measures could be expensive to implement. Meetings, refreshments, transport support and the logistics for ongoing monitoring required financial resources. Also, there

was some initial resistance in environments where citizens’ monitoring and critique was unfamiliar and community audits were difficult to accept.

Information-sharing was proved inadequate in some districts, with some parties still reluctant to share.

Participation may foster enthusiasm amongst citizenry which can result in high, unfulfilled expectations amongst community members. Some community took the invitation to become more involved as license to a rather “policing” orientation to the assignment.

A key lesson from the experience was that social accountability must be considered as an integral part of school feeding implementation. Therefore, proper budgetary allocations and continuous sensitization is necessary. Where a “standing” platform or forum is adopted, the members must be trained in advocacy in order to seek redress on their findings and positions.

Other lessons related to learning, sharing and knowledge management. It was evident that, given the wealth of information generated, a comprehensive information and communication dissemination plan was always useful. A learning orientation required proper record-keeping by all parties as well as a commitment to sharing between public sector, NGOs and CSOs. Therefore, the capacities of the various parties to mobilize and share information had to be built at all levels.

Some of the proposals for facilitating social accountability through information dissemination are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 *Proposals for Information Dissemination to Promote Social Accountability*

| |
|--|
| Better utilisation of electronic information dissemination including posting studies, stories and other information on websites of stakeholder organizations |
| Establishment of virtual and physical school feeding libraries |
| Productive and constructive use of district information centres and local FM stations |
| Production of TV documentary on roles and responsibilities in school feeding and success stories at the district and community levels |
| Production of periodic features and reports in daily newspapers |
| Use of platforms of NGO/CSO networks to brief and educate CSOs |
| Organization of periodic (quarterly) learning and sharing meetings for regional level actors |
| Circulation of GSFP news bulletin amongst stakeholders without ready electronic access |
| Wide distribution of district level manuals to interested parties |
| Production of hand-fliers on pilot initiatives, summaries of baseline reports and evaluations |
| Presentations at planned events of key stakeholders including briefings at assembly meetings, speeches at festivals, durbars and in religious worship |

Structured engagement with key local level leaders including PMs, traditional authorities, faith leaders, representatives of social and economic groupings and heads of departments

Periodic town hall meetings on school feeding programmes at various levels

Organization of annual multi-stakeholder platforms on school feeding

Proposals for Social Accountability in Advancing School Feeding in Ghana

The Ghana School Feeding Programme started as a poverty reduction and social protection intervention, prioritizing enrolment and retention in schools and child nutrition. While the potentials for employment creation and socio-economic development were acknowledged, their operationalization lagged behind other priorities. Recent policy declarations like the national budget statements (of 2012, 2013 and 2014) and presidential state of the nation addresses suggest that the nutrition and employment creation aspects are of renewed interest and priority. School feeding is therefore now of considerable socio-economic interest to Ghana. The transition is evident in the efforts at the re-design of the programme and the development of a guiding policy and legislative framework.

Social protection refers to actions taken to help individuals and societies, particularly the disadvantaged and underserved, to build resilience to risks, vulnerability and deprivations. It involves sets of public and private mechanisms that protect and prevent individuals and households from suffering the worst consequences of shocks and stresses; and promote resilient livelihoods. Social development relates to interventions that focus on promoting the dignity, rights and well being of all human beings. Social development aims at changing social institutions, relations and behaviour to improve circumstances and includes interventions related to infrastructure, education, employment, personal and community health, personal safety and the natural environment.

Civil society certainly has a critical role in initiating social accountability. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in their welfare and developmental interventions identify critical issues for advocacy which require structural change. These changes may be related to policy and legal instruments, ensuring action by duty-bearers and service providers and requiring more meaningful involvement of the citizenry in an ongoing and responsive manner.

However, other civil society entities must be involved in social accountability processes. These include small business associations (SBAs) as well as economic production and marketing groups that mobilize around the interests of their members. The experiences from the ICSO effort show that farmer-based organizations must be particularly encouraged and engaged to ensure and exact their interest in school feeding.

Faith-based organizations constitute another group, present in remote communities and whose members are committed by their beliefs. Young people's associations and groups with their energies as well as their own socio-economic concerns present good prospects for collaboration. All of these entities have mobilizing potentials which can generate momentum for demanding and disseminating information and local level activism for better performance and commitment.

Traditional authorities are a critical prong of the civil society framework. In relation to school feeding, traditional authorities have a dual purpose: as custodians of land and other natural resources; and as the accepted leaders of socio-ethnic groups of people and therefore guardians of their collective values and social capital.

The studies and interest shown by the GNAT also indicates labour organizations as key actors in the social accountability effort.

Media at the national and local levels have been important players in social accountability and advocacy in other sectors. Their role was recognized in SAP, as the Secretariat and the MLGRD worked to engage editors and local media. There are more gains to be derived as local media have the potential to create awareness, provide platforms for service providers to address issues and foster local language discussions. They also provide relatively "confidential" or anonymous facilities for citizens to report concerns and seek redress through.

Some of the possible roles that civil society actors can play towards promoting social accountability at the national, regional and local levels are indicated in Table 2.

Table 2 Roles of CSOs in Promoting Social Accountability in School Feeding

| CSO | National Level | Regional Level | Local Level |
|---|---|--|--|
| Non-governmental and development organizations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in national learning and information-sharing to improve policy implementation, guidelines, monitoring and evaluation • Dissemination of national level information to regional and local level | <p>Participation and experience-sharing to shape regional level agendas, provision of feedback and inter-district collaboration</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building for community-based groupings • Data-gathering using qualitative instruments • Information-dissemination • Advocacy with local authorities |
| Small business (SBAs): marketers, processors and caterers' associations; farmer-based organizations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation of national executives/ representatives in national learning events and transmission of concerns of the membership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in regional level information-sharing events • Organization of regional level networks • Coordination of advocacy issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of opportunities and interventions • Tracking of performance on commitments and planned targets • Collation of concerns and proposals from members • Engagement of local authorities and district administrators • Initiation of and participation in data-gathering exercises • Dissemination of information to members |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>Faith-based organizations</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collation of school feeding related concerns from membership for onward transmission to National SF Secretariat • Development of strategies related to supporting school feeding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in regional level information sharing • Assistance in mobilization of information and support for the programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy for support for SF with membership and communities • Assistance to communities with monitoring quality • Collation of community concerns and engagement of authorities on emerging concerns |
| <p>Young people's associations</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in national level learning events • Dissemination of relevant information to regional and district networks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in regional level events to represent members' issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of opportunities for employment creation and tracking of performance on these • Proposal of interventions and targets • Collation and transmission of members' concerns to authorities and engagement |
| <p>Traditional authorities as custodians of land and social capital</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodic engagement of the National Secretariat by the National House of Chiefs for information-sharing and dissemination | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation of the Regional House of Chiefs in regional learning events • Collation of position statements from members on submissions to the RCC on SF | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement of District assemblies/ DICs on plans and targets for SF • Information dissemination to the citizenry • Periodic monitoring of actual delivery of school feeding |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|---|---|
| <p>Labour organizations</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in national level learning events • Collation of issues, development of positions papers • Integrate SF issues into their national agendas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in regional level learning events to represent members' issues • Disseminate information • Collate issues for national level advocacy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in local level review events • Collation of issues and perspectives of members for district consideration |
| <p>Media</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracking of the implementation of national school feeding policy and responses to complaints and issues for redress. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation in regional level learning events to collate success stories, emerging issues for redress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness-creation amongst citizenry and beneficiaries • Dissemination of information on regional level performance in SF • Provision of platforms for service providers to address issues • Creation of local language discussion sessions • Channel for complaints from beneficiaries • Naming and shaming of non-performers |

Conclusion

The Ghana School Feeding Programme's new orientation emphasizes feeding school children nutritiously, effectively and efficiently while enhancing livelihoods, locally and nationally. It envisions national socio-economic development achieved through coordinated, integrated and accountable programming. It also seeks to provide reliable domestic markets for local farmers, effective local catering services and enhanced local incomes. With this multi-priority, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral orientation, accountability at all levels is essential to attain this vision. National, regional and local actors in the public, non-governmental, civil society and private sectors should all be involved. Demand-side accountability lags behind the supply-side efforts in school feeding. Therefore, social accountability efforts should be sustained in order to achieve meaningful results. Coherent civil society involvement in social accountability initiatives will maximise the impact of these interventions. Therefore, collaboration amongst the key parties is essential and existing social mechanisms and platforms utilised. Civil society also needs to develop capacities for information generation, membership mobilization and analysis and presentation of issues in order to be effective.

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