

## Helping Local Partners to have a Voice in Morocco's Public Education

By: [Nissrine Bouhamidi](#) (LEAD Project Manager, CARE Morocco), [Christina D. Wright](#) (Operations Officer, Education Global Practice, The World Bank), [Saad Filali Mknassi](#) (Capacity-Building Advisor, GPSA), [Maria Poli](#) (Capacity Building-Coordinator, GPSA), [Florenca Guertzovich](#) (Lead Capacity-Building Advisor, GPSA).



This blog post introduces the “[Linking Education and Accountability for Development](#)” (LEAD) project in Morocco, which was launched in December 2014. It is part of a series of posts capturing reflections about the trajectory of projects supported by the [Global Partnership for Social Accountability](#) (GPSA).

The main lesson is the critical importance of investing resources in nurturing the conditions to co-create localized strategies before jumping into the implementation of specific social accountability tools.

### Tailoring social accountability to Morocco's context

The initial idea of the [LEAD project](#) was to demonstrate that a [multi-pronged social accountability strategy](#) can inform government decision-making at district, regional, and national levels. CARE International Morocco (CIM), the lead implementing CSO intended to adopt a participatory feedback gathering tool building on a previous pilot. However, the idea never took off the paper. Joint analysis between CIM and the GPSA revealed that a resource-intensive, participatory process wasn't replicable beyond a small number of schools in the Moroccan context.

The original plan also included building on the experience of another MENA country. The first meetings and trainings held with stakeholders showed the limits of implementing a tool that poorly match the local context, where levels of autonomy and procedures at the school level are different than in other MENA countries. The adoption of a better collective and participative approach in developing the social accountability process was quickly considered to overcome the limits of the initial approach. The team rethought the strategy.

### Building on Partnerships

CIM decided to rely more on the local experience of its main project partner, the Near East Foundation (NEF) as well as that of the National Federation of Parent Associations (FNAPEM), the main advocate for parent and student rights in Morocco at both the local and national level. It was agreed to reallocate resources and implement a more participative preparatory phase.

This would lay the groundwork for a multi-pronged strategy. For instance, the LEAD team at CIM invested important resources to nurture **collaboration across civil society groups and other stakeholders (including the Ministry of Education’s Regional Delegations and representatives of the Parent Associations) working in the field, focusing on those partners that [add concrete value and bolster the social accountability effort](#).**

### Finding alternative ways of getting involved in the education system

Thanks to horizontal and flexible collaboration with civil society groups and government officials, the LEAD team found a more appropriate entry point for the project than originally envisioned: the *Projet d’école*, (i.e. the School “improvement” Project).

*Projet d’école* creates **an opportunity to institutionalize participation across the country with the potential for more systematic and sustainable impact than a one-off social accountability intervention**. But challenges are great. When LEAD was launched, there was a perception that social accountability would entail conflict and control issues between officials, school authorities and civil society groups. Some school principals did not think it was worth trying to attract funds from previously attempted decentralization projects and many of those who did were not successful in actually receiving the funds. Regional and district level officials were also facing difficulties in implementing guidelines and regulations coming from the central level given their lack of resources, often poor working conditions and limited competencies.

The *Projet d’école* is a relatively new national public policy to empower schools to propose a plan on how it will spend their limited resources to improve the quality of education. It is part of a broader government “de-concentration” /decentralization initiative that aims to provide opportunities to test and implement social accountability tools.

### Working with the grain rather than against it

LEAD is now working to identify the interests of all stakeholders and come up with concrete ways to overcome obstacles such weak capacity and mistrust – especially at the school level. Its innovations include: raising awareness of **social accountability as a process of dialogue to problem-solve and improve public services**, and agreeing with regional Delegations to access schools in two target regions during the inception phase.

During the implementation phase, LEAD will work with principals and sub-national authorities to co-create *Projets d’école* with parents and the broader school community. In this process, social accountability tools and LEAD’s resources will operationalize the schools’ improvement projects.

Supporting schools to develop their improvement project is a good entry-point for principals and other school-level stakeholders to accept the introduction and integration of social accountability, including Parent Association engagement, in the management of the school. The *Projet d’école* becomes a reference for the good governance of the school and raises its potential to attract new funders and stakeholders to support the activities of the school and improve the quality of education.

## Join the Conversation about Adaptation in Social Accountability

In its first year, LEAD's journey was not always a smooth one - like that of other GPSA grantees in Moldova and the Kyrgyz Republic (stay tuned for their lessons!). Building trust between government officials and other stakeholders in civil society and in schools is hard work and takes much nurturing. Communities and school principals need to develop new capacities to play their roles in a social accountability system as well as provide incentives that may involve raising funds to tackle urgent problems. The LEAD team has grown to work more effectively in partnership. Many GPSA-financed colleagues go through similar adaptive learning and management processes and the 2016 [GPSA Forum](#) will be an excellent opportunity for all to share their insights.

**This blog series will highlight key aspects of conversations between the civil society groups leading the projects and their partners, including World Bank project leaders, partner CSOs, government counterparts and the GPSA's Capacity Building Team. They offer key lessons about the project's implementation to date, including some examples of [adaptive management and learning](#) for [strategic social accountability](#). Curated by the GPSA Communications and Capacity-Building areas.**