GPSA Brown Bag Lunch Series
Voicing the Voice

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Sponsored by:

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Cordaid

Presenters: Dr. Paul Khomba, Health Program Manager, Cordaid | Izabella Toth, Senior Corporate Strategist, Cordaid |Caroline Kroon, Senior corporate open data manager, Cordaid

Discussant: Mariam Sherman, Director, Results, Openness, and Effectiveness, Operations Policy and Country Services Unit, World Bank

Chair*:* Roby Senderowitsch, Manager Global Partnership for Social Accountability, World Bank

I. CORDAID: THEORY OF CHANGE

"When local communities have the capacity to voice insights about their needs, aspirations and barriers based on evidence, they can be in the driving seat in defining what matters most to them: what actions should be taken, and what should be the priorities of the actors involved."
– Said Izabella Toth of Cordaid at a BBL held in the World Bank Offices in Washington DC on May 19th 2014.

Cordaid's works to build flourishing communities in fragile contexts. A flourishing community is one where the social structures, systems and institutions function inclusively and sustainably for the purpose of satisfying the needs of all members of the community. Izabella explained how enhancing the voice of the excluded and marginalized in fragile states and conflict affected regions through local, national and international lobbying and advocacy leads to more inclusive policies and accountable institutions and contributes to flourishing.

Izabella outlined the ten pathways which work to promoting inclusive and evidence-based citizen engagement towards sustained results in health, education, but also enabling a political space for civil society:

1. Enabling local communities and CSO's to voice their needs and issues
2. Civil society empowerment
3. Evidence based policy influencing
4. Social stakeholding
5. Opening windows for policy influencing
6. Linking local-global
7. Silent diplomacy
8. Acting on local women's perspectives and voices

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9. Use of media for policy influencing
10. Tracking policy changes

Citing two examples from Afghanistan and Nigeria, she explained how they work using the ten pathways. Working with the Afghan Women's Network (AWN) and Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organization (APPRO) they ensure women's perspectives on peace and security are included through monitoring women's security, women's access to the judicial system and to services like education and healthcare, as well as their freedom of movement. They use the information to approach policy makers at the national level. In Nigeria, they support local CSOs, including women and youth, to engage with the Government and the oil companies, capitalizing on the international donors efforts to support governance reform in the Delta. In each case Cordaid use which ever methodology is most appropriate and context specific.

II. EXAMPLES OF TWO PROJECTS

Dr Paul Khomba spoke of how their health project in DRC builds the capacity of citizens and contribute to enhancing the quality of health services. They work with community health committees providing tools, training and support. The committees are a means for people to express their health needs and expectations. The committees carry out a community diagnosis, which is then communicated to the health district management team who in turn feedback to health facilities.

Caroline Kroon further explained how in this project in the DRC, Cordaid use modern technology to improve the process of social accountability and engage better citizens. In the past the data which Cordaid collected was simply put into various reports and shared with the stakeholders. Through Open Results Based Financing, Cordaid now collate and structure the data in an online forum, making it more open and accessible. They then use this forum to verify the information. In doing this they are using newly developed methods to support an improved results framework with high-quality open data. By opening access to reliable community validated information available at all levels they improve citizen engagement. This is a direct dialogue with no 'filtering' by experts. "The context and situation may be complicated, but the approach can be quite simple and powerful" said Caroline "link citizen directly with service providers".

"Citizen Engagement is the two way interaction between citizens and Government or the private sector, which gives citizens a stake in decision making with the objective to improve development outcomes" said Mariam Sherman. She explained how the Bank is developing a new strategic framework for mainstreaming citizen feedback in World Bank operations. It will support citizen engagement in World Bank programs, projects and knowledge. The key focus is to improve development results and building sustainable national systems of engagement with Government and private sector included. A subset of this work is implementing the President's recent commitment to beneficiary feedback in all Bank projects with clearly identified direct beneficiaries.

III. CHALLENGES AND MOVING FORWARD

Reflecting on Cordaid's work, and the Bank's own approach to social accountability, Mariam highlighted a number of common themes. Social accountability needs to be:

- context specific, a one size fits approach will not work
- results focused: it must improve outcomes
- approached systematically as an ongoing improving process
- based on evaluative evidence: what works well and what not so well.
- gradual, integrating evidence based learning
- collaborative, working through partnerships

The discussion focused on the particular challenges of carrying out social accountability work in a fragile/post conflict environment, with weak government, and a lack of motivation and resources.

The starting point is often that trust between States and citizen is weak, and Governments do not feel comfortable being reviewed by citizens. Paul explained how this approach came about through on-going sustained dialogue with Government. In the dialogue the CSOs emphasized they wanted to work within the existing budget: they did not ask for an increase in the health budget, but for better allocation. It was also important to provide evidence. The nature of the website and the open data approach presented the evidence persuasively and publically. Cordaid noted how relations are built over time through dialogue and negotiations and how certain sectors such a health and education are more conducive to building trust and working collaboratively. Cordaid gave the example of how in another post conflict country, Burundi, the Government has now taken over the Open Results Based Financing system, and Cordaid only provide supportive technical assistance.

A second theme was the challenge of documenting good examples of policy reform resulting from social accountability. Mariam noted how the Bank is currently doing a stock taking of the Bank's activities on social accountability and the learning, and also looking at wider literature. Cordaid cited how in Guatemala they have seen how structured, institutional, dialogue mechanisms between organized, legitimate, representative CSOs and their Government counterparts, has led to legislation establishing the social accountability processes.

The incentives for Government were also discussed. An African Finance Ministry Official cautioned not to 'over-crowd' the government with demands, to be timely and strategic in what issues are presented and how. The approach must be a problem solving one, to avoid the Government feeling that are being challenged. Finally, Mariam highlighted the importance of linking social accountability to results, as this is a key incentive for Government, who want to see their programs succeed.