CARE's Governance Africa Learning Event: OUTCOMES
Mainstreaming CARE's Inclusive Governance Approach

CARE's Africa Governance Learning event could not have been timelier. With the international development community pushing inclusive governance and social accountability to the forefront of the development agenda, coupled with CARE International's (CI's) 2020 programme strategy to build a 'One CARE' that adopts a single mainstreamed approach to governance, this learning event has laid the foundations for our new way of thinking and implementation of governance programming.

The event was held in Nairobi between the 28th April and the 1st May 2015 for our governance practitioners in Africa. There were 36 participants from 15 country offices across the continent (Ghana, Zambia, Somalia, DR Congo, Togo/Benin, Malawi, Cote d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Uganda, Egypt, Burundi, Tanzania, Morocco, Kenya, and Rwanda). Participants shared learning on inclusive governance, social accountability and organizational accountability. The event also included external participants from TWAWEZA, Keystone Accountability, Ushahidi, Article 19, Viwango, FIDA Kenya, and SEND Ghana. The external stakeholders presented on inclusive governance programming in different contexts of Africa, the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in social accountability, current trends on development agencies accountability to their constituencies and developing a framework for implementing and measuring organizational accountability.

EVENT OBJECTIVES: The event had three main objectives: 1) to provide a platform for CARE governance practitioners to discuss what is meant by inclusive governance and how it currently looks in CARE's governance programming in Africa **(stocktaking)**; 2) to share and learn about promising governance models/practices/thinking in and outside the CARE world **(showcasing and learning)**; 3) to network with peers inside and outside CARE and start establishing a network of governance specialists in Africa **(networking).**

MEETING OUR OBJECTIVES

Over the course of the event, these key objectives were achieved by: (1) collectively discussing the changes that may need to occur in the way that we currently work and how best to engage with partners and move beyond CARE's 'comfort zone'; (2) panel discussions with external speakers challenged our current way of thinking and helped raise questions about how we have to change to make 'inclusive governance' a reality; (3) collectively designing what mechanism we want to lay down that will allow us to implement our approach.

Expanding CARE's engagement beyond the community/district level to national level.

CARE's entry point into further engaging politically is likely to be through CARE's strength in the area of governance in service provision. However, participants highlighted how this upstream governance and policy work is what we are most afraid of and consequently lacking. Conversations were had around how CARE needs to adopt a local **problem-driven and politically sensitive approach** when engaging at this higher level. CARE needs to apply sound **political analysis (PEA)** to understand the context and socio-political system. CARE also needs to **help build pro-accountability coalitions** between state and non-state institutions to form cross state-society agendas.

To engage in upstream policy work, CARE could consider **undertaking monitoring and evaluation of direct service provision**. Civil society's ability to monitor governance programs, collect the evidence and make evidence part of the policy setting agenda is helping in policy revision and more inclusive policy reform. CARE may also engage in **activism and mobilization of civil society**; build **alliances with media** to spread evidence and remain non-partisan, yet political; engage with and **build capacity of existing institutions** such as making elections more credible and accountable and supporting partners to be part of systems who are responsible for electing duty bearers; **align with government agendas** such as national level flagship programmes and include **women 'leaders'** in the political process at national level.

Country offices shared programming examples and highlighted projects with national level change.

CARE-ODI Community Score Card research has shown how linking to the national level can be **easier in strong, coherent governance structures** like Rwanda and Ethiopia that allow local government authorities to act on information from the community and enforce practices. In this context, **aligning programmes to national priorities** and **linking to existing mechanisms for national dialogue** may be crucial. Findings from the ODI Community Score Card report reflected country office's thinking and learning concerning higher level influence. This being that at the **participatory planning phase, it is necessary to involve partners** that are connected to regional levels and national levels and also **be aware of government officials' incentives** at all levels.

Programmes showcasing national level influence: Rwanda Public Policy Information and Monitoring Advocacy (PIIMA), Ethiopia WASH Committees (WASHCO)

Rwanda:
Existing Accountability Mechanisms:
➢ Synchronisation of CSC to *Imihigo* (district open days) allowing a space for citizens to participate in local development planning processes.
➢ Annual national dialogue (high-level accountability mechanism to bridge gap between local and the local populations with channels for holding local government to account at national level).
➢ Embraced social media (a means of providing local populations with channels for holding local government to account at the national level).
Impact:
➢ CSC focus was multi-sectorial and tended to involve actors working at different levels.
➢ Service providers and health facilities took the initiative to alter practices through the CSC without this being imposed from above (due to incentivizing performance monitoring mechanisms).
➢ Information being channelled to the national level and contributing to policy dialogue at this level. For instance, practices for enforcing health insurance targets, derived from the CSC programme, were inputted into the district dialogue process. This information was then passed to several

ministries and contributed to the government decision to review these categories at the national level. This advanced national feedback loop seems to be a function of the strength and coherence of the Rwandan State.

Ethiopia:

Existing Accountability Mechanisms:
➢ Institutionalized public participation in communities at the local level
➢ Decentralized system

Impact:
➢ Attempts to escalate issues to national levels in Ethiopia. For example, the question of improved access to electricity was discussed in several interface meetings during the Ethiopian CSC process; however this is not an area that local government has authority over, so officials relayed this information to the appropriate higher authorities. No actions had been agreed at the time of writing the CARE-ODI report.
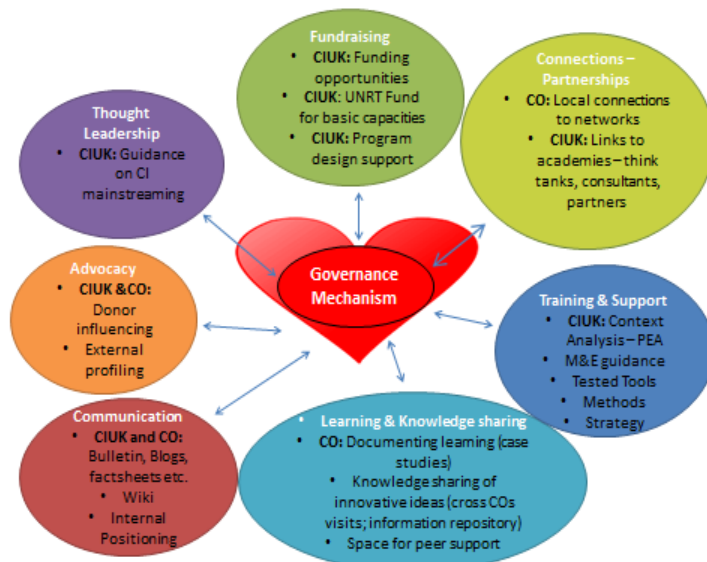
Lessons from these programmes:
➢ Institutional commitments are necessary to ensure sustainability.
➢ Going beyond the simple assumption – information leads to accountability (Fox, 2014). Need to identify existing accountability mechanisms and pro-accountability actors that are interested in working with Civil Society.
➢ The CSC process should work to establish strong, consultative relationships with higher-level decision makers and local government actors who can empower service providers; provide potential for scaling up; and promote sustainability.

Designing a mechanism for rolling out the inclusive governance approach

This mechanism signifies a move away from the north-south knowledge transfer and towards creating a platform to mutually showcase and share knowledge. The mechanism agreed would largely consist of cross-country visits and peer training between COs; facilitating connections and partnerships with academic think-tanks; sharing case studies of CO programmes and learnings through webinars and providing guidance for funding proposals and M&E. This exchange would be led by CIUK, co-leaders (CARE Nederland, Denmark) and a focal person in COs nominated by RMUs.
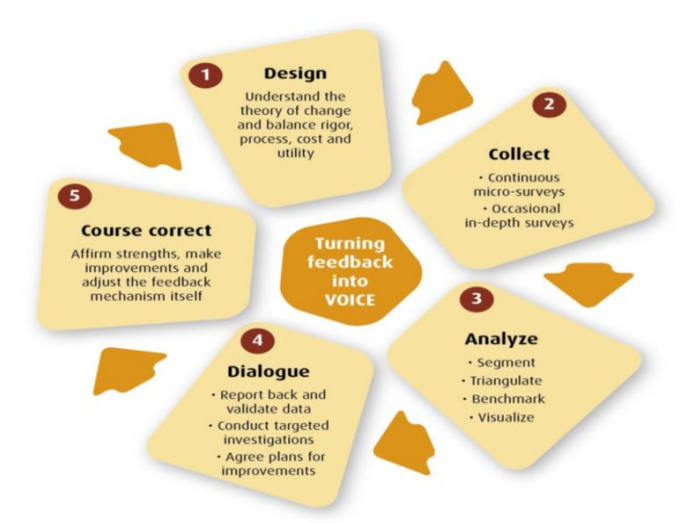

Figure 1: The Inclusive Governance Mechanism

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and how it can impact social accountability.

Information alone is not sufficient to hold authorities to account. Knowledge is about being able to spread the information (message) effectively. Technology only allows the spread of this information if it is applied bearing in mind the specific contextual situation. The **benefits** are that it creates a platform and closes the feedback loop between citizens and decision makers. The **challenges** are that there is a 'data gap' where politicians are making decisions based on 'old data'; Governments are suspicious of data and want to censor it; technology often excludes the most marginalized so it is not always inclusive. It is important to remember that technology is not a solution and just having a cell phone does not make you a more active citizen.

CARE's organisational accountability

Establishing standards, logic models and checklists for regulating civil society activity is important but alone are not enough. Feedback loops are the 'new accountability' for development outcomes (Keystone Accountability).

Accountability serves to balance power

Figure 2: Turning feedback into voice process

Principles of Collecting Feedback: Independent, Anonymous, Affordable, Frequent, Actionable. The key is to ask a few questions, often.

Emerging experience on organisational accountability across CARE world

CARE Rwanda showcased their management scorecard and highlighted how, despite initial hesitations over the approach, the SMT-Staff interface meeting was extremely open, fair and transparent resulting in constructive actions to address staffs' concerns. CARE Ghana presented the Governance and Accountability Learning Initiative (GALI) and its impact on strengthening accountability relations with beneficiaries (Cocoa Life communities). The approach led to strengthened stakeholder involvement and collaboration and an increased drive by communities in demanding accountability from duty bearers.

CONCLUSION

CARE's Governance Africa Learning Event has allowed us to share views and experiences so that we can collectively build a common approach to CARE's governance programming work and better understand what mechanism we want to develop to put this common approach into practice. The event has been highly successful in accomplishing what it set out to achieve and positive participant feedback resonates with this success. Some emergent issues for further consideration:

- ➢ **CARE's Culture**: Overcoming CARE's restrictive organisational culture when acting in a 'political' environment. This is a hope, but no clear action was presented.
- ➢ **Partnerships:** Working in partnerships with a third party who does not share the same vision is a challenge. When working with strategic partners, how do we get partners on board to accept our values? How will we engage with new partners?
- ➢ **Leadership:** Getting buy-in from leadership, strong support from CARE UK and CO champions.
- ➢ **Sharing information:** How will case studies be shared and how will cross-country visits and training be funded?
- ➢ **Innovation:** There is an over emphasis on community score cards. The CSC is not the silver bullet, we need new innovative approaches.
- ➢ **Acting and putting into practice**: How are we going to put all we have talked about into practice and who is going to be leading this? **Measuring our impact:** Becoming better at M&E so that we can have demonstrable impact.

The Governance Africa Learning Event was a first giant step on the mainstreaming inclusive governance process. An agreement was made for CARE UK to take these questions back with us for further reflection so that we can provide country programmes with clarification and guidance on them moving forward.

Founded in 1945 with the creation of the CARE Package, CARE International is a leading humanitarian organization fighting global poverty. CARE International places special focus on working alongside poor girls and women because, equipped with the proper resources, they have the power to lift whole families and entire communities out of poverty. To learn more, visit www.care-international.org.