

**SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN SERVICE DELIVERY: INTROSPECTION ON  
COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES USED BY SOCIAL ACTION  
FUNDS**

**Upendo W. Mmari**

Institute of Rural Development Planning, Tanzania

**Sinda H. Sinda**

Dodoma University, Tanzania

**George F. Kinyashi**

Institute of Rural Development Planning, Tanzania

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**ABSTRACT**

In the recent past, various development agencies and governments in many developing countries have been upholding social accountability as a means for improving social services delivery. Nevertheless, effectiveness of social accountability mechanisms differs across regions. This paper presents an analysis of Community Management Committee (CMC) as one of the mechanisms used to ensure social accountability in service delivery in Tanzania. It mainly uses qualitative approach to explain the effect of power relations between development agency, CMC and the community on accountability and quality of the delivered services. The results show that the power play between the agency and CMCs has affected the nature of the CMCs, such that both the CMCs and the community have failed to hold the agency accountable. It is concluded that though services were delivered, the value for money of the delivered service has been compromised due to the fact that the agency has not been held accountable.

**Key Words:** *Social accountability; community management committees; accountability mechanism; TASAF*

**Introduction**

In the recent past, various development agencies and governments in many developing countries has been upholding decentralization as a means for improving social services delivery. In Tanzania, for instance Sundet (2004) observed that “although the service delivery was traditionally the duty of Central Government, various Local Government authorities (LGAs) have been empowered to undertake this role”. As Sundet (2004); Warioba (1999); Max (1991) puts it the transfer of the duty from the Central Government to LGAs is because the LGAs have been considered to be effective in service delivering at the local level.

The LGAs effectiveness thought by Sundet (2004); Warioba (1999); Max (1991) above is linked to the fact that LGAs are located at the interface of the local community than the Central Government does. Such location literally suggests that local communities are able to demand accountability from the LGAs if at all the power play between them and the LGA structures allows. Relatedly, Makara (2006) observed that “over the last two decades of Local Governments operations there has been a rise in interest to strengthen the interface between Local Government structures and local community to produce and maintain services needed by the society”.

Strengthening of the interface between LGAs and the local communities reflect the need for social accountability. To achieve effective social accountability proper mechanisms to ensure accountability must be in place. Initiatives for social accountability mechanisms are not necessarily the same across the world. In India for instance, citizen report cards and community score cards have been used as social accountability mechanisms; which according to Shah (2005) they “have assisted citizens to have irresistible influence in service delivery”. A case from Uganda shows that “the use of school committees; mandatory posting of funds transfers at schools and district offices; and media publication of funds transfers from central government to the districts; has tremendously reduced the leakage or diversion of funds intended for use in primary schools” (Sundet 2004).

In Tanzania, a look on social accountability mechanisms at local level is associated with recognition of the adoption of Decentralization by-Devolution (D-by-D) policy of 1998. In this framework, inter alia service delivery burden has been transferred to private sector, LGAs and other Governmental agencies. One of these agencies is Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF) of which we have spent time to study the power play between it and the local community; due to our hesitations to the credit it has been accorded particularly on the quality of the services it provides. Kinasha (2006) observed that “in order to ensure that TASAF program staffs are accountable to the society in service delivery, TASAF management has been using a number of mechanisms which include but not limited to Participatory Budgeting through Participatory Rural Appraisal and Monitoring Committees”.

When one examines the service delivery in relation to social accountability, important questions to be asked include; can the poor villager hold service delivering agency accountable? Are the CMCs as social accountability mechanisms capable of ensuring delivery of quality and adequate services in rural areas? And how can CMCs be positioned for them to be effective mechanism for social accountability? Such questions require deeper analysis. Accordingly, this study is our attempt to contribute to such analysis with the view to assessing TASAF II social accountability mechanisms focusing on the use of Community Management Committee (CMC) as a social accountability mechanism.

### **Research Methodology**

This paper is part of a research work on “the state of Local Government’s social accountability in social service delivery at village level in Tanzania” carried out by the first author in Ntyuka and Ng’hongona villages of Dodoma urban districts in Tanzania. The paper is based on the information obtained from the research report of the said author. The study employed a mixed method approach, biased towards qualitative approach, with a total sample of 88 respondents. Data for the said report was obtained through observations and a review of literature and policy documents on accountability and decentralized service delivery. Structured and semi - structured interviews with 2 TASAF officials; 9 Village leaders; 8 Community Management Committee members; and 66 villagers were employed. While a major part of the analysis and discussion relies on the empirical findings, a handful of relevant literature is also included. In the next section, we discuss the theoretical perspectives on accountability focusing on its forms and mechanisms used to ensure it.

### **Accountability Forms and Mechanisms**

Based on Ackerman (2004), accountability is a “proactive process by which public officials inform and justify their plans of action; in so doing their behaviour and results are sanctioned accordingly”. In a way it is a process which provide an opportunity to check whether an individual given authority and responsibility is acting on the basis of accepted norms, and whether his acts are beneficial to those entrusted him. So far accountability relationships appear in two main forms. These are traditional or horizontal; and social or vertical form of accountability.

#### **Traditional accountability**

Accountability relationship is said to be traditional when the public gets account of authorities’ actions through their representatives or indirectly. In this form of accountability Goetz and Jenkins (2005 in Lawson and Rakner 2005) contends that “power to account is delegated within the state apparatus”. It is not the interest of this article to give much details on this form of accountability, thus we believe these few remarks are enough at least for conceptualization.

#### **Social Accountability**

Unlike traditional form of accountability, social accountability occurs when the public directly exercise the duty of holding the authorities to account. As Przeworski et al. (1999) puts it, this form of accountability denotes “the ability of citizens and their associations to play direct roles in holding the powerful to account”. Sirker (2006); Lawson and Rakner (2005) are of the opinion that accountability of this kind “entails a broad range of actions and mechanisms that the public, media and CSOs can use to hold public officials and servants accountable”. They (Sirker; Lawson and Rakner) further argues that in the context of social accountability, “ordinary citizens are given platform to identify the needs and priorities; monitor the implementation of development programs; evaluate their final products; and finally sanction actions of the public officers”.

World Bank (1989) indicates that “the notion of social accountability has gained its popularity in poor states like Tanzania since the 1990s”. Among others Ahmad (2008)

associated this popularity with “the failure of structural adjustments and other [classic] neo-liberal economic reform programs in the international development arena”. Ahmad (2008) further argues that “development theories and practices behind social accountability; stressed the need for transparency and effective regulatory and legal frameworks for national governance”. Reflecting on Ahmad’s arguments, it appears thus that introduction of social accountability notion is part of the broad agenda to legitimize good governance.

### **Social Accountability Mechanisms**

Mechanisms for social accountability are strategies to ensure that the process of social accountability is carried out. Sirker (2006) opines that “there exist a range of bottom up strategies that can be used to hold public authorities and other power holders accountable to their decisions, conduct, performance and actions”. On the same note Muhumuza (2009) identifies some of these strategies to include “participatory budgeting”, which is a process where citizens are given a direct say in proposing projects and allocating funds or “allowed to prepare alternative budgets”.

In the foregoing list Muhumuza also included “public expenditure tracking” where citizens groups track how government actually spends funds with the view of identifying the loopholes or obstacles to resource flows. Other familiar examples of social accountability mechanisms are provided by Malena et al. (2004); Musoke (2009) who included “citizen advisory boards; budget consultations and hearings; social audits; lobbying and advocacy campaigns; citizen report cards; participatory public policy making; and involving citizens in public commissions and hearings and oversight committees”.

### **Social Accountability in Decentralization Framework**

Cheema and Rondinelli (1983) opine that, “decentralisation is the transfer of planning, decision-making or administrative authority from the central Government to field organizations, local administrative units, semi-autonomous and parastatals organisations, local governments or non-governmental organisations”. This transfer that Cheema and Rondinelli have mentioned tallies with one of the popular aims of decentralization; which is to improve service delivery to local people. European Commission Directorate (2003) has observed that in effort to make decentralization more efficient in achieving the foresaid aim of services delivery, “there has been an increase in cooperation between public and private sectors as well as public and public departments”. In Tanzania, one of the public – public partnerships at local level is that of Local Government Authorities and Tanzania Social Action Fund.

### **Tanzania social action fund in a public-public partnership framework**

Tanzania Social Action Fund started in the year 2000. In the past recent it has entered into its third phase of implementation. Although this article draws experience from the second phase popularly known as TASAF II, the structural issues with regard to organization has continued to be more or less the same with minor changes in all phases.

Structurally, TASAF is set to operate within three spheres of Tanzania government, namely; Central, LGA and Village Governments in mainland Tanzania. This structure expresses how

TASAF work in partnership with LGAs in ensuring effective decentralization and social accountability. The roles of each sphere in the structure with regard to TASAF social accountability in service delivery are summarized here under. At national level, there are various bodies such as National steering committee, Sector Experts Team, TASAF Management Unit and the Regional Consultative Committee (RCC). At the Local Government Authority there are District Executive Director (DED), with LGA Finance Committee, Management Team (MT) and Ward Development Committees. At village level there is Village Assembly (VA), Village Council (VC), and Community Management Committee (CMC).

The role of the organs at the national level are policy making for TASAF; approval of issues; and oversight of TASAF accountability. LGAs have the role of establish partnership with TASAF through signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The MoU will clearly articulate responsibilities of the parties, as it relates to TASAF supported activities including, responsibilities at each stage of sub project cycle. At this level also LGA Finance Committee and Management Team (MT) will deal with appraisal, technical support, monitoring of sub-projects during implementation and oversee operation and maintenance. Ward Development Committee (WDC) will facilitate sub projects implementation by overseeing technical issues in the project and report back to MT.

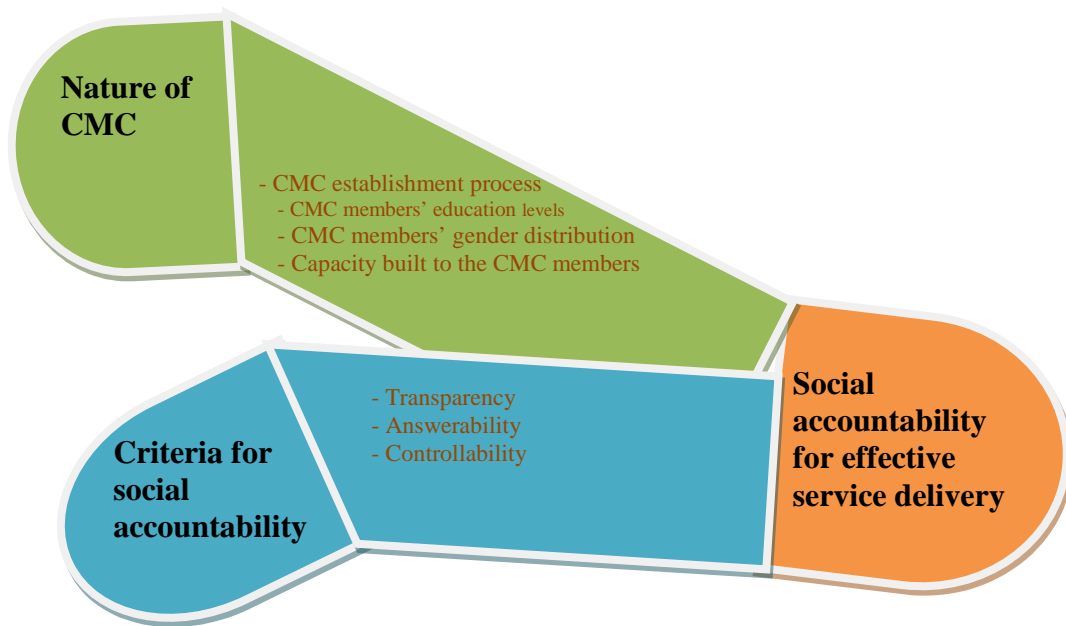
The Village Assembly is responsible for endorsing interest expressed by respective beneficiary group in the village during Extended Participatory Rural Appraisal; endorse CMC members proposed by the respective groups; receive and discuss sub projects progress reports submitted by the VC. The VC will ratify the CMC elected/endorsed by the Village Assembly and delegate the responsibility of day-to-day management of the sub project to the CMC. The VC will receive sub projects progress reports from CMC and make quarterly public reports to the Village Assembly before submitting reports to the LGA. The VC will supervise the process from pre sub project cycle to post completion stage. The CMC members shall be democratically elected during a meeting attended by at least 70% of the intended beneficiaries of voting age. Members of this committee will be 50% women. The CMC will be responsible for implementing the sub projects; and deal with the project quality assurance in accordance with the TASAF Community Sub project Management Hand book.

### **Theoretical Views on Cmc Influence on Social Accountability**

Based on Lawson and Rakner (2005) transparency, answerability and controllability are criteria for social accountability. This implies that a certain agency is said to be accountable if it is transparent, answerable and controllable by the public either direct or indirect. However, it is unfortunate that due to power play likely to happen between rulers and the ruled; agency's transparency, answerability and controllability do not happen automatically. This calls for the concerned public to develop mechanisms to ensure that the agency is complying.

In studying effectiveness in social accountability, assessment of the accountability mechanisms in place is crucial. This article presents the assessment of effectiveness of CMC in ensuring TASAF accountability in delivery of school class buildings. The assessment is based on the premise that effective social accountability is the product of the nature of CMC

and the state of the social accountability criteria identified in this subsection. This idea is illustrated in the figure 1 below.



**Figure 1: Framework for effective social accountability**

Figure 1 shows that the nature of CMC and the state of the three criteria by and large tells whether social accountability will be effective. The details on how the two are supposed to work are given in the next paragraphs.

**The nature of community management committee**

The nature of CMC in this article is explained by four variables, namely; CMC establishment process; CMC members’ education levels; CMC members’ gender distribution; and the type of capacity built to the members of the CMCs. Establishment process as one aspect of the nature of CMC, is important in the determination of effective social accountability because social accountability is about raising the voice of the public. As such, it is important that the CMC establishment process, assist the public to put people that are true representatives of themselves. To achieve this we have documented who was involved in putting CMC members in power and how it happened.

The second aspect in the nature of CMCs is members’ education levels. Education attainment has a bearing effect on ones’ ability to assert himself. Being a CMC member entails being entrusted with the duty of voicing public interest. Voicing public interest is a special task, not everyone can do; it requires assertive skills and experience. It is through having education CMC members can be able to question authorities of their lack of accountability. Indeed it is through education CMC members can avail communities’ rights and seek improvement in the structural functioning of governance. This calls for election of individuals with certain level of education to take charge. As a result education levels on CMC members have been sorted to relate to their ability to hold the agency accountable.



Gender distribution in the CMCs is the third aspect in the nature of the CMCs. Gender balance is supposed to guarantee equal representation of both women and men, so that altogether their needs and interests are met without prejudice. In most cases gender balances largely increase the motivation of women to stir up development process (ensuring accountability) because they feel equally respected as their counterpart men.

Finally, on the nature of the CMC is the type of capacity built to the members of the CMCs. Capacity building for social accountability is inevitably radical; this is because in most cases ensuring accountability is by nature confrontational. WDR (2004) insist that “citizens’ capacity to influence policy makers or their agencies can be achieved through raising their voice by putting them at the center of service delivery; by enabling them to monitor and discipline agencies; and by amplifying their voice to policy making”. The foregoing explanations gives an impression that the type of capacity built to CMC is supposed to be more than the project job description of the CMC members; or hinting them about what are their duties and responsibilities in the project. As argued by Kinyashi (2006) for citizens to demand accountability from the power holders, “they should be enabled to understand both micro and macro framework conditions governing the project”. In the present study efforts have been made to document what aspects of capacity building have been taken into consideration by TASAF as far as CMC members’ capacity to ensure social accountability is concerned.

#### **The criteria for social accountability**

The conceptual framework has identified three criteria, namely; transparency, answerability and controllability. “Transparency is a notion that requires that decisions and actions are taken openly and that sufficient information are available so that other agencies and the general public can assess whether the relevant procedures are followed, parallel to the given mandate” (Lawson and Rakner 2005). Accordingly, Khemani (2004) asserts that transparency in service delivery should “imply providing citizens with greater information about the resources and responsibilities of their local representatives so that they can hold local representatives accountable for the delivery of basic services”. The question addressed in this study is not only how the committee as representatives of people access information from TASAF, but also how TASAF does ensures that the information has reached the targeted local community.

The second criterion is answerability which involves an obligation on the part of the decision makers to justify their decisions publicly so as to substantiate that they are reasonable, rational and within their mandate (Lawson and Rakner 2005). In regard to this the article is presenting how TASAF as an agency for service delivery has been answerable to the CMC; and how the CMCs themselves have been answerable to the community members. Controllability as a third criterion refers to the existence of mechanisms to sanction actions and decisions that responds to given mandates and procedures. Lawson and Rakner (2005) indicates that this is often referred to as “a system of checks and balances; of which may take many forms, including “shaming” and praise for the actions made”. In regard to controllability the article is presenting how TASAF as an agency for service delivery has

been controllable by the CMC; and how the CMCs themselves have been controllable to the community members.

### **Social accountability for effective service delivery**

As noted before in this section, if the nature of CMC is good, the CMC will be in a position to positively influence the three social accountability criteria. The influence will cause achievement of effective social accountability. The effective social accountability is expected to enhance achievement of effective and quality service delivery; which according to Makara (2009) is “how proper is the quality of service delivered be it a road, school or dispensary building; [and] to what extent resources reach the intended beneficiaries”. In this article, the fact whether CMC have influenced effective service delivery has been documented to show both quality of the service and the reaching of the resource to the beneficiaries.

### **An Introspection on the Tasaf Operated CMCs**

#### **The nature of committees in the study area**

As noted earlier the nature of the CMC is explained by the process of establishment; education levels of the CMC members; gender of the CMC members; and the type of capacity built to the CMC members. In the subsequent subsections we are going to present the empirical results related to the nature of the CMCs in the study area.

#### **The CMCs establishment process**

In order to understand the process of establishing the CMC in the study area, it was important to know the election process of the CMC members. The search for this knowledge necessitated probing the respondents’ awareness on when the CMCs were established. There were three categories of respondents; household, Village Council (VC) members, and CMC members’ category. Our interest was the awareness of the first two categories, in this respect data revealed that most (81.8%) of respondent from the household category were not aware of when the CMCs were established. And that 25% of the VC members were also not aware. This suggest that majority of sampled household didn’t attend the CMC members election meetings; and that a good number of VC members were also not present. This raises a question as to whether the CMC members were elected by 70% of the eligible voters, as TASAF guideline stipulates.

To be sure, those who claimed to be aware of when the CMCs were established were asked to give estimations of the number of people attended in the meetings to select CMC members. The estimates indicate that in each village the meetings were attended by 100 to 150 eligible voters. These estimates were confirmed by Village Executive Officers (VEOs) from the respective villages, who being the secretaries of these meeting, give the same estimates. Off course an obvious question, that comes to mind will be, why one has to use estimates instead of getting attendance list from the VEOs. This option was thought, but to our surprise we could not find adequate data to support our claim. When the VEOs asked to give list of villagers who participated in the said meetings; it happened that in one of the villages there were no records, and in the other village the VEO provided undated list of names without participants’ signatures. Posing a question as to whether the list was genuine or cooked. It is due to this record keeping problem that is why we had to depend on estimates. We were



relieved to find that the poor record keeping phenomenon at the village level is not a new finding, but Price Water Coopers (2003) has before us indicated that “the extent to which village government leaders keep records has been established to be as very poor”.

To this end we will not be considered as jumping into conclusion if we argue that; the likelihood that CMC members were selected by less than 70% of the eligible voters as TASAF guidelines requires is high. Again this would have been expected because some have argued that it is common for poor people not to participate in community meetings. Nyimbi (2008) for instance asserts that, “poor participation is among the key challenges of community participation at lower levels of local government authority”. As a matter of fact, if the logic of the TASAF guideline of 70% participation was to get majority on control of the project process and output, then we can already see from here that, the nature of the CMCs has a false start. This is so because it is unlikely that those CMC members selected through this process could be the choice of the majority, simply because the majority was not there.

CMC establishment does not end with how many has participated in the election, but it goes as far as how the vote has been casted. In respect to this it was interesting to know that both TASAF official, VEOs CMCs and sampled respondent indicated that open ballot was used to select CMC members. Here comes another snag in the process – “the use of open ballot”, yes! It is a snag, because open ballot has a potential to be abused. It can be abused in the sense that unlike with secret ballot, casting voter in open ballot is misleading; especially in a village environment people are likely to fear of feel shy of the contesting familiar faces. In such situation they may be contrived to raise their hand in favour of people who they don't like or they know they cannot handle the position; just because they don't want to offend the contesteer or an influential person who raised hand in favour of a certain contesteer.

As such, using open ballot led to a risk of selecting candidates who may not be true choice of the voters, or even contravene some basic principles of ensuring social accountability. For instance, we know that a person cannot easily ensure that his wife or his blood related brother is accountable for public good; but it happened that in one of the villages; there was one CMC member who had blood relationship with one of the VC members. This for sure complicates the effectiveness of the whole issue of social accountability and service delivery. We are of the opinion that this complication could be sorted out in providing proper guidance on relationship issues as well as providing for secret ballot opportunities.

### **Education levels of CMC members**

In the conceptual frame work section, it was argued that education attainment has a bearing effect on ones' ability to assert himself. Consequently, it was important to know if education was considered by TASAF as one of the basis for selecting CMC members; and what were the actual levels of education of the CMC members. The results indicate that in TASAF guidelines there were no strict criteria with regard to education attainment, expect that one knows how to read and write. Findings with regard to education status of the CMC members reveal that all CMC members in the study area were holder of certificate of primary school. However, there were two worse cases, where one CMC member was identified to have no

ability to write and a treasure of one CMC was noted to have had problem in recognizing value of the project expenditure.

Based on the fact that education is power, the findings from this study suggest that CMC members in the study area are likely to have less capacity to demand and influence the demanding of social accountability in service delivering. This is in line with Kinyashi's (2006) argument that "when people lack appropriate knowledge and power they tend to suffer from inability to ensuring [social accountability]". The fact that TASAF did not consider education as a strict criterion for CMC members had ignored the power relation between the poor and the development agencies. Such an act, as Cornwall (2002) argues may have undermined the possibility of equitable consensual decision making and restrict the possibility for the [CMC members] to think outside the box [of the project activities] and so reinforced the [TASAF staff] hegemonic perspectives.

Off course we are aware that most people in the areas where TASAF operates are primary school graduates, such that some will ridicule our argument by saying that why should we expect TASAF to have established CMCs with high education qualifications. But our argument is that though in those areas most of the people are primary school graduates, still there are few people with high education levels; and that because CMCs does not require the whole village, it should not be a problem to set criteria that could enable villages to select among the few educated fellows so that they can benefit from their relative high education. After all in most cases those with high education in these areas were educated in the expense of the majority, there is no point therefore of not setting appropriate ways of harnessing these qualities; if at all TASAF is interested in being socially accountable in service delivering to the communities they claim to serve.

### **Gender of the CMC members**

As noted earlier, nature of CMC involves the composition of CMC in terms of gender. Gender composition was analyzed to see the extent to which men and women were involved in demanding social accountability. The results show that in terms of gender the CMC members were equally distributed. There was equal number of males as there were females. The findings suggest that with regard to gender sensitivity TASAF in the study area has done its best to follow its project operational manual (TASAF, 2005). This point to the fact that things are possible provided that; officials are given the right guidance and decide to commit themselves to follow the guidelines.

### **The type of capacity built to the CMC members**

The type of capacity built to CMC members has a bearing effect to the nature of the CMCs in relation to their capacity to hold the TASAF officials accountable. To understand the direction which CMCs were taken by the capacity building programs carried out by TASAF; effort has been made to get information on; what was the content of the training programs; and who conducted the training. Interview responses from both TASAF officials and CMC members, including the review of the TASAF project operation manual, revealed that CMC members were trained on their duties and responsibilities in the project implementation.

To be specific on the training content, some of the topics with regards to the CMCs capacity building are given here under:

1. Project funds management linked to initiating, reviewing, and approving payment; and withdraws of money from bank.
2. Project material procurement conditions including the need to get three quotations before purchases are approved.
3. How to involve community in the project implementation by contributing their labour and
4. Building standards and measurements, this include:
  - a. How big windows, doors, and classes should be.
  - b. How many bricks per 50kg bag.
  - c. How the bricks should be laid during building.
  - d. Wire mash and sand measurement and ratios.

In regard to who conducted the training, the finding shows that trainers were from TASAF and Municipal Council. Additional information revealed that apart from conducting the training; the trainers were also involved in other activities of the project.

Looking the foregoing facts i.e. “the training contents and the trainers” in the lens of the conceptual framework of this study; it can be argued that, the two can hardly enable the CMC members acquire the capacity to hold the agency accountable. This is because, capacity building meant to groom people to carry out the work of ensuring accountability is expected to enable those people to acquire such skills as “popular education, assertive and argumentation skills, information about their rights” (Cornwall 2002). In the case of TASAF above these skills were sidelined, to such an extent that the CMC members were trained to be project implementer “just as another category of project staff – probably you may wish to call them local staff” instead of “watch dogs”. This has resulted to what Kinyashi (2006) has termed as “closing the CMC members in a “box” and hence denied them the proper reasoning and ability to hold accountable those actors that would seem to have misbehaved”.

Another challenge with regard to the training issue is on the capacity builders, it is hardy fool to expect that TASAF and Municipal project team would have groomed CMC members; to the extent that the CMCs acquire capacity to hold the same TASAF and Municipal project team accountable. We are of the opinion that different team of trainers would have done better than those involved in the project implementation. This tallies with the idea that capacity building is by nature empowering; and as Stokke (1998) puts it when empowerment is done to the poor it act “as a strategy for fighting the disempowering activities of both the state and the market”. It is therefore a nightmare to expect that the project team members will teach the CMCs strategies for fighting the disempowering activities they are likely to pose, because they know soon or later this gun will be pointed to them.

### **The criteria for social accountability in the study area**

#### **How transparency TASAF officials and CMCs was**

Before, it was argued that for transparency to happen “citizens should be provided with information about the resources and responsibilities of their local representatives so that they can hold them accountable” (Khemani 2004). Following this argument it was interesting to know the extent to which CMC and Community members had information that could assist them to base their social accountability claims. The findings have revealed that the CMC members had information only to the extent of helping them to implement the project. As noted earlier TASAF training or in this case TASAF information to CMCs enabled them to become another category of project staff, which we nick named as local staff. This implies that the extent to which TASAF has been transparent to CMCs gave the CMC members no substantial capacity to demand accountability.

The situation was worse with regard to CMCs’ transparency to Community member. Although in project like this financial information is to be transparently shared among stakeholders; it has been a shock to find that of the 66 household category of respondent only 2 were aware of the project value. 65 out of the 66 respondents could not immediately figure out that one of the CMCs’ responsibilities is to provide them with project financial reports. They all pointed out to the responsibilities which were direct related to project implementation. Apart from that, when they were asked to indicate if they were satisfied with the information provided by CMCs about the project and project implementation; it turned out that 62 out of the 66 respondents were little or not satisfied.

In an expected situation the findings have revealed that in the area there has been a tendency of intimidating individuals seeking information that would have had helped them to demand accountability. As a testament to this claim one member of the village council reported that in the recent past there was a certain villager who asked for clarification on a certain issue in a village meeting. Instead of being provided with the clarification, he was later on taken to police station charged with a case of breaking peace in the area. Based on this incidence the VC member said, since that time community members are so very careful in questioning the authorities. Another testament is related to the CMCs, it involve an unusual event where one CMC member slapped a Village Council member when the later went to the project site and asked for clarification on certain issues, which in his opinion they were not going on well. In the final analysis what can be said is that, under such circumstance the extent to which CMCs had provided information to Community members cannot substantiate that CMCs were transparent enough to the Community members.

#### **How answerability TASAF officials and CMCs was**

Answerability was looked at by seeing whether decision makers have fulfilled their obligation of justifying their decisions publicly to enable the public or subjects substantiate that they are reasonable, rational and within their mandate. This kind of justification happens in meetings where officials has to report on progress on development activities or project implementation to the community; and the community has opportunity to question and seek for clarifications on unclear issues. In regard to this, results have revealed that TASAF officials have conducted adequate meetings with the CMCs to discuss matters related to

project implementation. Major issues that have been discussed have to do with why in some cases funds came late, how community members reluctant to contribute to the project can be approached, and how to face other project implementation challenges.

What can be deduced from these results is that, the adequate meetings conducted by TASAF between CMCs; cannot be a testament of TASAF answerability to CMCs. This is because TASAF has managed to reduce the function of the CMCs to project staff; such that as argued earlier, CMCs were no longer watch dogs. They had been trapped in a boss – sub ordinate relationship with TASAF, such that it is sheer fallacy to consider that a boss (TASAF) will be answerable to sub ordinate (CMC). To substantiate that CMCs were answerable to TASAF, consider the CMCs relationship with the Community.

Results have revealed that all household respondents agree that meetings on matters related to TASAF school construction project have been conducted. When they were asked as to whether they were satisfied with the way the meetings were conducted 62% said they were not. Their dissatisfaction was associated with the secrecy in financial reporting and less opportunities given to them with regard to questioning and seeking clarification on unclear issues. This implies that these meetings were more of information giving than dialogue among stakeholders. As such cannot be viewed as CMCs effort to be answerable to the Community. Off course as note earlier, with the history of slapping and taking people seeking clarifications to police, it will be implausible to think that Community members will make any effort to get the CMC answerable to them.

#### **How controllability TASAF officials and CMCs was**

TASAF and CMCs controllability has been analyzed by revealing how CMCs and/or community members were able to put in place a system of checks and balances in ensuring that services are effectively delivered. In regard to controllability the results shows that neither CMCs nor the Community members had knowledge on what to do if TASAF or CMCs mess up with the quantity or quality of the project output. It is likely that lack of such knowledge has contributed to lack of controllability of TASAF officials by CMCs and of CMCs by the community members.

#### **The Power Play Conceptualization**

As argued by the Urban Dictionary (On line) power play is “the act of using knowledge and or information against someone else in order to gain advantage [over him], it is getting someone do something for you unknowingly; often the person initiating the power play is asserting dominance by assigning someone else a tedious task”. In a way power play is a form of manipulation which in most cases occur between the knowledgeable and unknowledgeable; whereas the former manipulate the later. Power play defined in this way, lead to a conclusion that when two people of varying levels of knowledge are to accomplish a common goal; the knowledgeable will do his best to use the unknowledgeable to the benefit of the former.

This being the case due to knowledge differences, development agencies working with the poor are at risk of power playing the poor either directly or through the local elites,



sometimes knowingly or unknowingly. To mitigate this risk, program designers and policy makers need to close power playing loop holes by providing comprehensive guidelines on how service agencies should relate with the poor in their dealings with them.

In the present analysis, two power playing loop holes were identified. The first has to do with the lack of strict criteria for CMC members' education qualification and the type of ballot used to select CMC members. Lack of these criteria allows for power playing because, in a worse case the agency is able to influence the selection of yes men to protect his personal benefit from the project. In the worst case, the whole process can be captured by local elites; who according to Chambers (1983) "are the ones who receive the lion's share of attention" of the outsiders, and who are able to frame their interests to make them "image as village's priority of development". In our case, this loop hole seems to have enabled the local elites to find their way in the CMCs. Being at the interface of the TASAF and the Villagers, the CMCs have facilitated the power play such that Villagers were used to contribute to the construction project with expectations of getting quality school buildings; but as indicated in the next section they did not. Additionally, the dissatisfaction raised by the household category of respondents on financial reports may be interpreted that perhaps much of the outside project funds have benefited the CMCs and TASAF staff.

The second loop hole is associated with the capacity building program. CMCs were meant to represent Villagers in the task of ensuring that TASAF staff were accountable. For them to be able to perform this task they needed to be trained on more than the project and its implementation. The TASAF decision to train the CMCs on the project implementation only; without inviting someone to train on issues related to how to ensure accountability present a power playing loop hole. The loop hole is evident in consideration of the fact that, villagers were left to believe that they have selected people who will represent them in ensuring that TASAF staff deliver quality and adequate services. Against this expectation is the fact that somewhere along the way the CMCs were converted to become part of the project team. This arrangement cannot be said that it had benefit to the villagers, it would rather appear to have been used to justify that project fund are used properly; which may not be always true. The justification hides the benefits that TASAF staff may have personally accrued from the project due to lack of accountability; but also TASAF being a state agency, the state gets its share of benefits by getting something to say to donors and/or in the coming elections. These hidden benefits would not have been accrued if there were no a loop hole to power play the unknowledgeable villagers both by default and by design.

### **The Implications of CMC's Nature and lack of Accountability on Service Delivery**

The preceded sections have discussed how the power play loop holes have affected the nature of the CMCs and how the three accountability criteria namely; transparency, answerability and controllability failed in respect to ensuring social accountability. The power play effect on CMCs nature and the failure of the three criteria of social accountability have a bearing effect on the quality of service that has been delivered in the study area. This is true looking on the quality of class rooms that were constructed in the study area. Fact about the said quality was gathered through two methods, the interview and observation.



Through interview, it was observed that although a good number of respondents (41%) appreciated TASAF project for at least having class rooms in place; still majority of them (59%) were little or not satisfied with the quality of those class buildings. This finding confirm to Tidemand's (2005) observations, who once found that "one of TASAF strengths over other programs in classroom building is that they normally accomplish building notwithstanding the quality (my emphasis)". Nevertheless, as much as this strength may be cherished it should be noted that effective service delivery is not only having the resource reached the target group but also should be viewed as "how proper is the quality of service delivered" (Makara 2009).

Since majority of the respondent were little or not satisfied with the quality of the project output, it was interesting to find out what exactly went wrong with the quality. In their response, they pointed out issues of poor quality of bricks used to build the classes; poor cement ratio used to build floor and plastering on walls; and poor quality of windows. These respondents' views were true to the extent of the observations made at the two schools in the study area. Through these observations, it was evident that small holes have been observed on the floor of the classes constructed in the study area, concrete especially along the door sides and edges of the corridor floors are being eroded; also the window in place are not worth the project value. Photo 1 and 2 presents testament of the quality of the classes, considering the fore mentioned components of the building.



**Photo 1: Holes on the floors of the first observed School**



**Photo 2: Holes on the floors in the second observed School**

Considering what is seen in photo 1 and 2, it is difficult to imagine the long term status of these school buildings if in only about two to three years since they were constructed their conditions are deteriorating to such an extent. Bearing in mind this difficultness, it suffices to say that for achievement of sustainable development the need to ensure that service delivery agencies are monitored to provide service of proper quality need not to be overemphasized.

### **Conclusions and Lessons of Experiences**

The apparent conclusion from the results is that power play has affected the nature of the CMCs, to the extent that though schools have been constructed there is evidence that value for money has been compromised. This conclusion suggest that the likelihood that poor villagers can hold service delivering agencies accountable is small; and that CMCs as social accountability mechanisms have hardly succeeded to ensuring delivery of quality and adequate services in the case understudy.

It is worth noting that for effective social accountability in view of adequate and quality services; who is recruited and how he is recruited in the accountability team are important questions to be answered at the very beginning of the recruitment process. This will be possible by providing specifications that will enable actors to get best people among the villagers in terms of education and acceptability by the communities. We know the importance of democracy in such a process, but if there is no specific criteria for selecting accountability team members; we are in doubt that democracy will turn out to be “two wolves and a lamb voting on what to have for lunch” as Franklin (On line) put it. The two wolves would be the development agency and local elites against the lamb – villagers.

To get the CMCs (or whatever name the watch dogs are given) work effectively; they should not be involved in the actual implementation of the project. Involving them as the testaments in this article suggest denies them the opportunity of being watch dogs over the respective agency; and hence defeating the very purpose of their existence.

As noted somewhere in the text, in most cases ensuring accountability is by nature confrontational. This being the case, it is unlikely that training conducted by the people who are going to be monitored will impart the monitors with necessary confrontational skills. To do away with this complication, it is important that development agency involves consultant in training of skills relevant to carrying out the job of social accountability.

In connection with the involvement of consultant mentioned in the foregoing paragraph, perhaps it is high time for Community Social Organizations with commitment to emancipation of the poor, to rise with an agenda of fostering community capacities on accountability issues with undivided attention.

What is also evident in the text is that, the uses of one social accountability mechanism to hold agencies accountable may not be plausible do the job effectively. In our case CMCs will be more effective if are complemented with other mechanisms like; posting of project information on Village office notice board, introducing opinion boxes, allowing community to visit project sites with on the spot questioning without being threatened.

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