

**ALGAF SESSION V**  
**MODULE II: SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY**

**TOPIC: Mechanisms and Applications of Social Accountability**

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**1.0 Introduction**

Discussions on social accountability today is a continuation of efforts being undertaken worldwide to ensure that resources allocated to fight poverty are used as planned and produce expected outcomes or results. Since our national independencies, millions if not billions of US dollars have been injected into our economies in form of grants and loans; these are in addition to the internally generated revenue. A reasonable percentage of the funds are dedicated in poverty eradication. Tanzania for example, has been one of the leading recipients of external aid in the Sub-Saharan Africa in absolute terms since it got independence in 1961. Tanzania still receives considerably more aid as a percentage of GDP than most of the other countries in East and Central Africa. The country received a total of US \$ 16,632 million in foreign aid between 1970 and 1996. Tanzania's share of total aid from all the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries was about 8.3 per cent during the 1970s by then it was the largest recipient of aid in Sub-Saharan Africa. To date Tanzania still ranked second aid recipient in sub-Saharan Africa, slightly behind Mozambique. These figures can be compared with other countries in the region<sup>1</sup>. With all this support, 70% of Tanzanian population living in rural areas and in unplanned urban settlements still live below \$2 a day; with no adequate basic livelihood security needs, including food not necessarily balanced meals, diseases like malaria, HIV/AIDS, waterborne diseases, illiteracy, and poor habitats are on an increase. In fact, Tanzania is still ranked unfavourably in per capita income and income poverty among the Sub-Saharan African countries<sup>2</sup>.

Resources allocated to address these societal ills are not adequate, and in many places, these resources do not reach the intended beneficiaries, i.e., poor people. They end in the pockets of the same people they have trusted, people with "power" or used to suppress them, buying arms

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<sup>1</sup> From Table 1 of "Total Aid to Tanzania between 1970 -1996 (in million US \$)" a case study undertaken within the World Bank project "Aid and Reform in Africa"

<sup>2</sup> UNDP 2003 Human Development Report (pp 51 to 58).

and luxurious vehicles for the officials. A typical example is that of a series of scandals facing senior officials in the Government of Tanzania, which resulted into the dissolution of the Cabinet on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2008.

The dissolution of the Cabinet was triggered by the resignation of the former Prime Minister Mr. Edward Lowassa and Minister of Energy and Minerals, Mr. Nasir Karamagi and Minister for East African Cooperation, Dr. Ibrahim Msabaha. The Ministers were implicated in the irregular awarding of a \$179 million (Sh214 billion) tender for the generation of emergency electricity in 2006 to purported US based Richmond Contractors Inc. And in Mid- April 2008 the former Minister of Infrastructure Development and former Attorney General, Mr. Mr. Andrew Chege was forced to resign following the report from published by the British Serious Fraud Office (FSO) in the London Guardian Weekly Newspaper. The FSO discovered that Mr. Chege maintained an account with over 1 million US dollars in offshore island of Jersey, U.K.

The same governments and their citizens' representatives use many methods to allocate and deliver these resources in form of services and tangible goods; but alas, they hardly reach the intended needy people including children and retired citizens. The same people who have served their nations and contributed so much during their energetic and productive lives. The delivery channels include the central government departments and agencies, contracted private sector, the civil society sector, local governments, community participation and sometimes-direct delivery to the households. Unfortunately as the May 2<sup>nd</sup> session presenter, Mr. Zerubabel Ojoo mentioned in his paper "Presenting Independent Oversight of Revenue, Public Expenditure, Service Delivery and Public Infrastructure", that the **quality** and **quantity** of these services remain poor. He sighted an example that approximately half of 11 million children under-five who die each year worldwide are from Sub-Saharan Africa.

## **2.0 Resource Allocation and Service Delivery Challenges**

I hope delivery of these services have been remarkably successful in some countries; while in many countries including my country Tanzania, majority of people are far from being adequately served and of recent the situation is getting worse. Tendencies of embezzlement of public funds, corruption and all sorts of societal ills are now regarded heroic acts. In every corner of the country today, no single person, from kindergarten children to the retired citizens who does not know the buzz word - "UFISADI" **literally** a Swahili translation of a very serious and grand corruption. I suspect other ALGAF member countries are facing similar challenges if not problems. It is simply because these countries share the same socio-political factors such as undemocratic political regimes, multi-party practices and processes are suppressed, access to information and freedom of expression is not there. And generally, the third sector which is supposed to be a mouth piece for the citizens is not well developed because of the factors mentioned above. Socio-economic data in our national archives on primary health service delivery, illiteracy rates, environmental degradation and other developmental indicators can vividly be a proof.

Something should be done to improve service delivery to the poor. This is why the 26<sup>th</sup> World Bank Development Report 2004 - "Making Services Work for Poor People" re-ignited and reinforced the hopes for confronting the service delivery challenges to the poor. The 'Foreword' statement by then the World Bank President Mr. James D. Wolfensohn provides a summary of which we will share today. Just to stimulate your thinking, I would like to quote the following paragraphs from the former WB president foreword statement:-

"We enter the new millennium with great hopes. For the first time in human history, we have the possibility of eradicating global poverty in our lifetime. One hundred and eighty heads of state signed the Millennium Declaration in October 2000, pledging the world to meeting the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. In Monterrey, Mexico, in the spring of 2002, the world's nations established a partnership for increasing external assistance, expanding world trade, and deepening policy and institutional reforms to reach these goals. Foreign aid, which declined during the 1990s, has begun to increase again.

Nevertheless, the first few years of the 21st century bring heightened challenges. HIV/AIDS and other diseases, illiteracy, and unclean water threaten to dash the hopes of millions, possibly billions, of people that they might escape poverty. Tragically, conflict has undermined development in many countries. Peace and development go hand in hand. And even as we learn how to make development assistance more effective, aid continues to be criticized for not being effective enough" - (World Development Report 2004 – Foreword pp. xv –xvi).

To improve service delivery, the WDR recommends **institutional changes** that will strengthen relationships of accountability—between **policymakers, providers, and citizens**. These changes will not come overnight. Solutions must be tailored not to some imaginary "best practice" but to the realities of the **country or the town or the village**. One size will not fit all. But I am convinced that this new way of thinking about service delivery, and indeed about development effectiveness, will bear fruit, particularly when matched with adequate resources and a desire to assess what works and what does not, and to decide what must be scaled up and, indeed, what must be scaled down.

### **3.0 Basic Concepts of Accountability and Social Accountability**

#### **3.1 What is Accountability?**

Accountability could mean:

- To account for what we deliver or to be responsible to what we do,
- To comply with what has been agreed upon by law or by position held by individuals or groups (to whom),

It is a **SUPPLY** and **DEMAND** equation! It is all about **RESOURCE** allocation and **RESOURCE** use!

**Accountability** – is the obligation of **power-holders** to account for or take responsibility for their actions (what they *supply*) to the **clients** who are the recipients of services and goods.

**Who are power-holders? (Supply side)**

**Power-holders** are those who (like you and me) holding political, executive (professional) positions, financial or other forms of power including officials in the government, private corporations, international financial institutions, civil society organizations (CSOs) and down at an individual level. **Power-holders** can be you and me as **head of a “household”, a councilor, a village chairperson, an MP, a government MINISTER** and even presidents. **Power-holders** can be a **group of people, a member or members of a task force**, and even a **sheikh or a bishop!**

The discussion today focuses on actors and officials in government or public institutions as service providers to the public (**supply side**). They are **power-holders** to that end and therefore are to account to the **citizens** and particularly the poor people - the (**demand side**) of equation. That means **accountability** is a **democratic** right for citizen to demand for services supplied by their representatives and agents both in terms of quality and in terms of quantity. In other words, it is a fundamental principle of **democracy** that citizens have the *right* to **DEMAND** accountability and like wise public actors have an *obligation* to be accountable to what they **SUPPLY** in terms of quality, quantity, efficiency and with effectiveness visas vise resources available and allocated!

### **3.2 Democracy and Social Accountability**

We should ask ourselves – Are *democratic states or democratic principals* sufficient enough to make citizens hold the state or state officials to account for what they deliver to the society?

Look at what is happening in Tanzania now! As I said earlier, the word “**UFISADI**” is as common as a table spoon in the kitchen! This is happening right after the 2005 General Elections, “branded” by Overseas Observers to be Free and Fair elections! And, perhaps the same must have happened in neighboring Kenya. Nevertheless, two years on the line, the same elected government or few officials have proved that “Free and Fair Elections” are not a sufficient tool or mechanism to hold government or government officials accountable<sup>3</sup>. It is a proof that, both conventional “horizontal” and traditional “vertical” mechanism of accountability are not effective and have proved to be weak and blunt instruments for holding government officials and employees accountable for specific actions.

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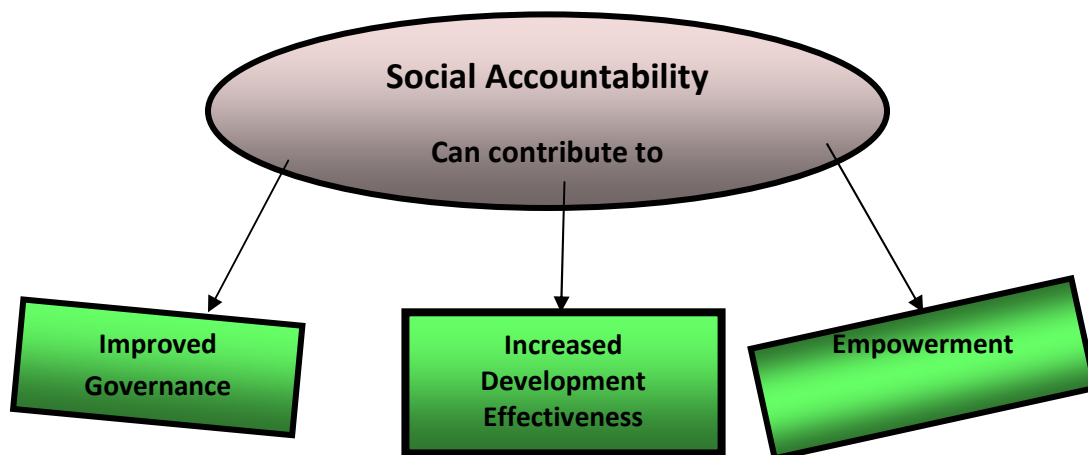
<sup>3</sup> Even if citizens were fully and accurately informed of the views and actions of every political candidate (which is far from the case), elections still only allow citizens to select among a limited number of individuals or political parties. They do not offer citizens the opportunity to express their preferences on specific issues, to contribute in a meaningful way to public decision-making or to hold public actors accountable for specific decisions or behaviours. See World Bank (2004a) for a discussion of the weaknesses of elections as a mechanism of accountability.

### 3.3 Then what is social accountability?

Effective Social Accountability is therefore:-

- About creating direct **accountability** relationships between **citizens** and **power holders** (the **state**).
- A broad range of **actions** and **mechanisms** beyond voting that citizens can use to hold the state to account,
- It is as well as the actions on the part of government, civil society sector, media organizations and other societal actors that promote or facilitate accountability efforts.

**Figure 1: The benefits of social accountability<sup>4</sup>**



Social Accountability has become an important approach, as shown on figure 1 above, to both the public and civil society sectors for improving governance processes, improved service delivery, resources allocation decision making and an effective community empowerment tool.

#### **Improved Governance:**

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<sup>4</sup> Figure from “World Bank Institute – Working Papers: 2005. Social Accountability in the Public Sector: A Conceptual Discussion and Learning Module – Page 7.

Governance in simplified language is a process on how things happen, on how things are managed in an organization; be it a household, a manufacturing entity, a government, or a UN body!

What are the indicators of good governance then? How do we see good governance is happening?

- Transparency at all levels in resource allocation
- Effectiveness of interventions-commitment, accountability
- Representation at all levels of the poor, minority in governing/managing.

Accountability of public officials is the basis of good government and a prerequisite for an effective democracy. The citizens' rights and responsibilities are evolving and expanding relations between citizens and their governments are characterized by what some have termed "a crisis of legitimacy" (Gaventa, 2002) or simply a "governance crisis" (Paul 2002).

### **Increased Development Effectiveness:**

**Social Accountability** also contributes to increased development effectiveness through *improved public service delivery* and *more informed policy design* as a result of direct participation of citizens. As pointed out earlier, in many cases the government fails to deliver key essential services to its citizens due to problems of misallocation of resources, leakage of resources through corruption, weak incentives or a lack of articulated demand.

By the same token, governments often formulate policies in a discretionary and non-transparent manner that goes against the interests and actual priorities of the poor. The purchasing of an expensive **radar and presidential jet** in early 2000 by the government of Tanzania despite opposition from the parliamentarians and the general public is one such example.

These problems are perpetuated because the three key groups of actors in the **public policy and service delivery chain** which include **policy makers, service providers** and **citizens** have different (sometimes conflicting) goals and incentives, compounded by information asymmetries and lack of communication. By enhancing the availability of information, strengthening citizen voice, promoting dialogue and consultation across the three groups of actors and creating incentives for improved performance, social accountability mechanisms can go a long way toward improving the effectiveness of service delivery, rendering public decision-making more transparent, participatory and pro-poor. Since poor people are most reliant on government services and least equipped to hold government officials to account, they have the most to gain from social accountability initiatives.

### **Empowerment Of Communities:**

Social accountability initiatives can lead to the **empowerment** of citizens, particularly the **poor** . While there is no single definition of empowerment, at its broadest, it can be understood as the expansion of freedom of choice and action (Carmen Malena, Reiner Forster and Janmejy Singh on *“An Introduction to the Concept and Emerging Practice”*).

Civil Society Organizations should play a leading role in the efforts to **empower** and enable citizens to have a single but strong voice. In turn, the enhanced voice empowers the poor and increases the chance of greater responsiveness on the part of the state to their needs.

Building the capacities of communities through their local groupings including community or faith based organizations should be the foremost responsibility of the civil society sector in African countries. In addition, communities need to develop the capacity to identify their own development needs and demands, to mobilize their own resources, and to claim their rights to additional resources and work to realize their goals. At the same time, the civil society sector should help communities to identify and address the underlying causes of poverty and social injustice, including gender inequity and some of the causes that could be rooted deep in their own traditions and cultural norms.

#### **4.0 Social Accountability and Other Related Concepts**

As described earlier, both the governments and the civil society sector have a key role to play in improving **governance** and thus deepening **democracy**. There are a number of key concepts and agenda items that are related to social accountability (SA) mechanisms, such that:

- Social accountability is sometimes regarded as the *“demand side* of good governance”, as it is based upon the **active involvement of citizens** in exacting accountability from their elected representatives and leaders.
- It is prerequisite in fighting **poverty** through empowering citizens to take part in pro-poor policy design and improved service delivery.
- Social accountability has important **gender** implications as well. In almost every country around the world, women are systematically underrepresented at every level of decision making. This situation of political marginalization weakens women’s capacity to promote their interests and defend their rights vis-à-vis government. Social accountability mechanisms, due to their bottom-up, inclusive and demand driven nature, enhance the ability of women to make their voices heard. Some examples of SA tools with **gender** bias include:
  - **Gender Budgeting and,**
  - **Gender disaggregated participatory monitoring and evaluation.**

In fact, social accountability initiatives have a potential to draw the attention of the needs of other **vulnerable groups**, including people with disabilities, children or youth and the elderly. In light of the intense focus on the plight of children by CSOs around the

world, the Convention on the Rights of the Child has become the main basis for children's budgets and related policy work.

- Social accountability is closely related to **rights-based approaches to development**.
- In the context of **decentralization**, social accountability mechanisms have helped to strengthen *links between citizens and local-level governments* and in assisting local authorities and service-providers to become more responsive and effective.
- On the political agenda and as seen by policy makers, the core function of **civil society** is to hold government accountable. In fact, the essential role of the civil society sector is to engage in social accountability processes.
- Social accountability can also be understood as a particular form of **civic engagement**, one in which citizens engage with the state for the purpose of holding public officials accountable.
- The concept of social accountability is also closely related to evolving notions of **citizenship** that give added emphasis to citizens' rights, roles and responsibilities and lead to enhanced citizen expectations and engagement. And finally but not least;
- Finally but not least, the concept of social accountability is also linked with **community participation**. Participation of citizens distinguishes social accountability from conventional mechanisms of accountability. In many cases, citizens, communities and CSOs do not merely participate in social accountability activities but initiate and control them. While many participatory approaches focus exclusively on the individual community or at micro-level, social accountability mechanisms expand opportunities for participation at the macro-level. This may include, for example, citizen involvement in the analysis and/or formulation of national or local budgets or linking the findings of local level participatory monitoring and evaluation exercises to budgetary, administrative or governance issues at higher levels of the public service delivery chain.

The obligation of government officials to be accountable to citizens derives from notions of citizen's and information rights, often enshrined in constitutions, and the broader set of human rights. **Social accountability** offers mechanisms to monitor and protect these rights. The concept of social accountability underpins the right of citizens to expect and ensure that government and other institutions including the private sector acts in the best interests of the people.

### **3.0 SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS AND APPLICATIONS**

Social accountability mechanisms allow ordinary citizens to access information, voice their needs, and demand accountability between elections. Emerging social accountability practices enhance the ability of citizens to move beyond mere protest toward engaging with bureaucrats and politicians in a more informed, organized, constructive and systematic manner, thus increasing the chances of effecting positive change. Table summaries key government functional areas in relationship with applications and mechanisms or tools of SA processes.

**Table 1: Social Accountability practices in a public office**

<b>LEVEL OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION</b>	<b>SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY APPLICATIONS</b>	<b>SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS AND TOOLS</b>
<b>Policies and Plans</b>	Participatory Policy Making and Planning	Citizens' Participation in:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ local forums</li> <li>✚ study circles</li> <li>✚ deliberative polling</li> <li>✚ consensus conferences</li> <li>✚ public hearings</li> <li>✚ citizens' juries</li> </ul>
<b>Budgets and Expenditures</b>	Budget-Related Social Accountability Work <sup>5</sup>	Citizens' Participation in:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ budget formulation</li> <li>✚ budget analysis</li> <li>✚ performance-based budgeting</li> <li>✚ public education to improve budget literacy</li> <li>✚ public expenditure tracking surveys</li> <li>✚ social audits</li> </ul>
<b>Delivery of Services and Goods</b>	Social Accountability in the Monitoring and Evaluation of Public Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ public hearings</li> <li>✚ citizens' report cards</li> <li>✚ community scorecards</li> <li>✚ public opinion polls</li> <li>✚ citizen's charters</li> </ul>
<b>Public Oversight</b>	Social Accountability and Public Oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✚ CSO oversight committees</li> <li>✚ local oversight committees</li> <li>✚ ombudsman (investigators on public complaints)</li> </ul>

## References:

1. Arne Bigsten (Department of Economics, Göteborg University, Sweden) and Deogratias Mutalemwa, Yvonne Tsikata & Samuel Wangwe (Economic and Social Research Foundation, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania) . August 1999. "Aid and Reform in Tanzania"

<sup>5</sup> Refer to Dr. Mohamed Halfani's paper "An overview of key operational issues to increase citizens' voice in revenue and expenditure planning" on ALGAF VIII Session III on April 4<sup>th</sup> 2008.

2. World Bank Institute – Working Papers: 2005. Social Accountability in the Public Sector: A *Conceptual Discussion and Learning Module*.
3. *World Development Report 2004.- “ Making Services Work for the Poor People”* President James D.Wolfensohn – Foreword Statement, New York: Oxford University Press.
4. World Bank ’s Sourcebook on “ Social Accountability: Strengthening the Demand Side of Governance and Service Delivery”
5. Carmen Malena, Reiner Forster and Janmejay Singh. 2004. Social Accountability : An Introduction to the concept and Emerging Practice (Social Development Paper No. 76 , December 2004.)
6. CSRWorld – India – Social Responsibility and Compliance. 2008 on Website: [www.csrworld.net](http://www.csrworld.net).