

Talking Points – Sesheeni Joud Selvaratnam (ActionAid)

Panel Discussion: Bridging the Data Divide

Date: 10 February 2020

Time: 2 – 3.15 pm

- Good afternoon everyone. It's my pleasure to be able to share with you experiences and perspectives from ActionAid on our work on social accountability and citizen driven data.
- The vision and preamble of the 2030 agenda committed by member states - "we are determined to take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world on to a sustainable and resilient path. As we embark on this collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind."
- ActionAid: Our work across the world focuses on empowering the most vulnerable small communities where we work with people living in poverty and exclusion, their communities, peoples organisations and social movements to harness the power in people. In our work with small holder farmers, women and young people are central to what we do to ensure fairer share of power, resources and driving change in local levels.
- **In communities (local / sub national levels):** ActionAid's long term partnerships with peoples organisations involve building awareness, provision of training (i.e CRSA, etc), supporting small holder farmers to identify and prioritize their demands to local duty bearers. We do this by connecting communities with relevant local level government departments and ministries to be able to discuss their needs and seek responses; based on evidence/data generated through scorecards, social audits – then also to hold public hearings which provide the space and opportunity for discussions between local duty bearers and communities. Through our work, we support agroecology, CRSA and support the use of traditional knowledge. We also support communities to participant in participatory budgeting and planning processes where resources can be allocated for local priorities. For example, in AA's work in Myanmar since 2006 we have supported building communities in prioritizing their demands through the village books which has led to the development of citizens charters and engagement with at the Township Level.¹
- **National levels:** working with coalitions, we enable community representatives, their organisations to connect to key line ministries and departments.
Example: the Asia Development Alliance have over the last 2.5 years facilitated training in country in Asia. They have also further contributed the bringing forward key indicators that would bring further citizens engagement and building on existing frameworks / indicators to facilitate multistakeholder engagement.
- **Global Partnerships:** importance of collaboration and building on existing discussions on citizen generated data / and ensuring these are recognized in national reporting, follow up and review processes.
 - ActionAid is a member of the coalition called the [Leave No One Behind Partnership](#) that brings together national and international civil society on the inclusion of citizen generated data to inform national and sub national planning, budgeting, programme implementation in line with the 2030 agenda.
 - Phase I included 5 countries (Vietnam, Bangladesh, Nepal, India and Kenya) and Phase 2: just starting with workshop held in Denmark and upcoming in UK, Malawi, Philippines.
 - Currently in Kenya there is an ongoing discussion / consultation on working with citizens platforms on SDGs as well as connecting to NSI, GIZ, Paris 21 and GPSDD

¹ Download: [Meiktila Citizens' Charter app on Google Play](#)

and other stakeholders. Some of this already started from the data ecosystems mapping which facilitates discussions on data availability, publication, skills, management and collection, collaboration and the politics.

- Our work as the coalition has had many ongoing discussions on data protection, management and methodology. This is supported by Development Initiatives and IISD.
- Key learnings from working with a diverse group of stakeholders from the start brought forward:
 - Have a governance mechanism/ structure for the generation and use of data
 - Respecting especially on SDG 2 the sovereignty of farmers on what the data will be used
- Refer to last week's workshop (SDG 16+). Similar conversations as this are ongoing across different SDGs and opportunity for collaboration, learning and sharing.
 - Building of trust amongst state and non state actors (at national level, I am personally aware of the ongoing discussions between the citizens platforms and SDG coordination units / ministries).
 - Building alliances and partnerships: local, national, regional and global
 - Take these discussions on data to country level where its possible to include communities, who are most affected in the discussion along with the local / national civil society, academia, UN custodian agencies as well as the relevant government ministries and departments. Note on NSI – will produce data but need to be also supporting by existing coordination / mechanisms at the national level.
 - Whilst we are focused on SDG 2.3 and 2.4 in this discussion, also the realization as mentioned earlier about the interconnectedness of the 2030 agenda across all the SDGs. This also calls for not only working with the respective line ministries but also with planning and finance ministries.
 - Acknowledging our respective roles as government, multilaterals, civil society – build on each others strengths and existing civil society discussions on citizen generated data and its inclusion.
 - Taking a quote from the slogan from the youth movement “nothing about us, without us” – including communities in the discussions on needs / demands to have targeted programming. Just as much data sources and actors are important – the most important being the use of this data to enables changes in the lives in communities especially amongst small holder farmers and their communities
 - Call for CSOs to coordinate and converse with their National Statistics Offices (**Example from UK**)
- Civil society organisations in countries work closely with grass root communities. Many of these are led by representatives of the communities who then connect to national and/or international civil society like us. As part of their work – they are able to share evidence / data on needs of communities and their priorities.
- Citizen generated data is not meant to duplicate but rather to supplement and add to existing information especially on the most vulnerable and marginalized communities in countries. And also to be included is the emphasis on partnership across different stakeholders (as listed in SDG 17)

Example: Nigeria

The Community Participatory Assessment on Government's Expenditure and Community Score Cards is a social accountability tool that ActionAid Nigeria has used at local, state and national levels. Amongst the key outcomes are:

- The Growth Enhancement and Support Scheme (GESS) improved after the community participatory assessment of government's expenditure and development of community scorecards on the programme;
- Access to Credit for smallholder women farmers improved after the community participatory assessment of government's expenditure and development of community scorecards; and
- Extension services support for smallholder women farmers improved