

KENYA: PROGRESSIVE DEVOLUTION – VILLAGE ELDERS ARE KEY

Playing with power

Christian Aid has been developing its work in this area since 2008, when it piloted tools and approaches with the Christian Aid Brazil and Kenya programmes. In 2009 GTF partners prioritised power analysis as the priority focus area for programme learning. To kick-start the GTF programme learning, short power training sessions were recently run in east Africa with local partners, including those involved in the GTF programme.

The training seeks to provide participants with the concepts and analytical tools to understand power and power dynamics, to identify potential levers, allies and opportunities for change and to develop strategies that take advantage of them.

Devolution in Kenya

By reorganising districts and constituencies and, most importantly, establishing regional governments, the new constitution has paved the way for significant change in Kenya. How positive those changes are depends on the detail of the devolution plans being made in coming months. In the Kenya workshop, one group focused on this reform process, identifying which actors had the most influence on it, whether positive or negative.

The group identified a cluster of actors they named the 'beneficiaries of corruption' – political parties, MPs, ethnic groupings, cronies and sycophants – who are likely blockers of reform. The group recognised civil society would struggle to influence those actors, let alone break up the cluster. Their mapping, however, showed that this cluster secures a lot of support from village elders.

'There are some actors that we tend to ignore, but in the power mapping exercise we did, we identified the village elders as important. This is very important, especially because it tells us where to start our advocacy – who to use to get to the big people'

Pauline Opolot, Uganda Debt Network

Elders identified as a target

The group reflected that devolution was likely to erode further elders' formal power. Rather than sidestepping this, they decided that recommending an institutionalised role for elders – for example, in auditing the devolved funds within their communities – might shift them from supporting their powerful sponsors to supporting progressive reform. As well as being important for the immediate goal of devolution, working with elders was identified by the group as important for long-term work on political accountability in Kenya.

Unpredictable results of power analysis

It is never clear where power analysis will take you. It was interesting that while this group, which focused on national policy, ended up prioritising a local level target, a group focusing at the micro-level on women living with HIV found themselves prioritising national religious institutions.

GTF: BASELINE SURVEY REVEALS DOUBLE BARRIER FACING PARTNERS

The baseline process

Last year each GTF partner carried out a baseline exercise to help identify the programme's starting points. The baseline questions were drawn from Christian Aid's logframe indicators and the 16 partners responded in very different ways – from undertaking a handful of focus group discussions and completing the template we provided, to commissioning researchers to produce very thorough analyses.

Partners did not stick rigidly to the questions posed, mainly because of a lack of guidance and space to internalise what the baseline was asking. This meant the baseline research did not provide all the quantitative data Christian Aid needed.

The baseline did, however, provide significant learning in terms of the process of doing these exercises and the contexts within which the partners are operating. In particular, the baseline pulled out some learning about the barriers to participation and interaction across the diverse spectrum within which this programme operates.

Barriers to building relationships with authorities

- In some countries there were no opportunities for marginalised groups to engage with the authorities. In Nigeria, groups are so far removed from the decision-making processes that the annual visit from the governor's wife is their only form of interaction with authority. This ceremonial occasion is rarely used to raise community concerns.
- The existence of spaces for interaction does not, in itself, guarantee quality dialogue. The baseline revealed deep-rooted resistance by MPs, local governments and powerful individuals that manifested in a variety of ways and often undermined these processes, including:
 - (a) a general lack of transparency in decision-making;
 - (b) indolence and unresponsiveness to needs, complaints and demands;
 - (c) corrupt practices such as extortion and profiteering in exchange for securing basic services; and
 - (d) active resistance, including threats as a deterrent to criticism.

Barriers to participation

- There was a uniformly low practice of participation across the 17 project locations, mainly because projects in the countries that are less fragile tend to focus on particularly marginalised groups or regions, such as indigenous communities in Brazil and the north of Ghana. Ability and motivation varied significantly amongst the groups and this is obviously important to address, but so too are illiteracy and innumeracy, lack of time, apathy, very negative perceptions of the government, fear of reprisal and social restrictions.
- Sexual discrimination as a constraining factor on women's participation was evident in most of the countries. In Tanzania, 46 per cent of those surveyed were aware of village plans and budgeting, but of those only three per cent were women. Similar discrepancies in the ratio of male-female participation were evident in the Dominican Republic.

Implications

It's not clear that awareness-raising and rights training alone will not overcome the barriers to participation identified above. Furthermore, while quite a few GTF projects are attempting to increase women's participation, the baseline revealed that developing effective new strategies to overcome the obstacles to women's involvement needs to be a central consideration for all projects in the programme.

Christian Aid's Governance and Transparency Fund (GTF) programme 'Power to the People: Making Governance Work for Marginalised Groups' is a five-year multi-country initiative aimed at helping marginalised groups to demand better governance successfully.

Funded by the UK's Department for International Development, the programme works with 17 local organisations in Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Ghana, Iraq, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Tajikistan, Tanzania and Uganda.

TAJIKISTAN: VOLUNTEER INTERVENTIONS HELP WOMEN RECEIVE ALIMONY



Gulchehra, above, volunteers with the Public Chamber established by Rights and Prosperity in Muminabad

Tajikistan is a highly centralised state where leaders are more used to taking from the people, rather than providing for them, and people are more likely to defer to, rather than question authority.

It is in this context that Gulchehra volunteers at the local Public Chamber established by Rights and Prosperity in the Muminabad region. She has been trained by Rights and Prosperity, and through her work Gulchehra has supported communities to gain access to clean water and land to cultivate. 'When I see people with problems, I really feel like I should help them,' Gulchehra says. 'People trust in us and we try our best.'

The activities of Gulchehra and her colleagues in the Public Chambers at Muminabad and Rudaki district are helping people. At the start of the project, people found the government notoriously unresponsive, difficult to get hold of and likely to ask for 'informal payments' to process people's claims. Yet by June 2010, 19 out of 50 claims had received a positive response, including an impressive 10 out of 22 successful claims taken to the Rudaki Public Chamber in its first three months alone.

Many claims involve young divorced or abandoned women. Many marriages, particularly of young women, are not properly registered and result in divorce and abandonment. Tajik culture means that once women have left their family they cannot return. These women are reliant on alimony but, even though entitled to it, women whose weddings were not registered are less likely to secure that support. Successful interventions by volunteers like Gulchehra have ensured that young mothers now receive alimony, which in one case has meant a further \$46 a month for a young Tajik mother.

Key points

- Rights and Prosperity was opportunistic – taking advantage of new legislation to establish the Public Chambers.
- Institutionalising relationships with the local authorities has been key – not only to ensuring positive responses to individual claims, but to ensure the Chambers are working in partnership with the authorities as far as possible.
- The success of the Public Chambers supported by Rights and Prosperity will hopefully be replicated by other actors in Tajikistan to ensure more communities benefit.

UK: CHRISTIAN AID PARTNER ATTENDS GLOBAL GTF CONFERENCE



Benjamin Addo from SEND Ghana by Brighton's famous pier after an interesting conference with DFID and other organisations running GTF programmes

In September 2010, Benjamin Addo from SEND Ghana and Olivia McDonald, who manages Christian Aid's GTF programme, attended a conference with other GTF programmes funded by DFID. It was a useful event, which highlighted how high-profile the Fund is for DFID and that the department will be closely scrutinising its results to see if governance activities significantly impact on poverty.

'The new government in the UK brings with it a greater demand on DFID to demonstrate results of its interventions, such as the GTF, and to show value for money in all aid-related expenditure,' said Ben. He added that this has implications for GTF partners such as SEND Ghana. 'We are expected to shift from being descriptive to evaluative in reporting change.'

This drive to being more systematic in recording project changes will be a challenge for many GTF projects. It is worthwhile, however, explained Ben, because 'an improvement in our work [will] provide opportunity to leverage support for our initiatives in a highly competitive environment'.

This was evident at the conference, where DFID staff were keen to meet Ben and hear about SEND's work. So while the GTF also presents more pressures on reporting than core Christian Aid funding, for those that are successful in securing and evidencing change, the GTF also presents the opportunity to boost an organisation's profile internationally.

BRAZIL: BREAKING THE LINK BETWEEN POLITICS AND CORRUPTION

In the last newsletter we profiled an important legislative win for Christian Aid partner INESC: that people standing for political office should have a clean sheet, with no criminal convictions or cases pending.

Under the new law, up to 170 candidates for October's election would not have been able to stand for political office. A significant number were elected and will not be able to take up their seats if the Supreme Court decides this legislation should apply to the recent election.

In the Federal District of Brazil (where Brazil's capital city, Brasilia, is located), the impacts of the law are already being felt. In the past when politicians were facing criminal proceedings, they would stand down to appear cooperative, only to immediately re-stand, confident of regaining their seat.

Seeing that this tactic would no longer work, Jose Roriz, Brasilia's long-standing senator, instead arranged for his wife Weslian Roriz to stand, despite her complete lack of political experience. During her campaign she (accidentally) spoke of the need to 'defend' corruption, which helped contribute to a crushing defeat which is seen as highly symbolic by INESC and its allies.

Find out more about INESC's campaign for pro-poor political reform in Brazil at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=wl-G0YcZL_o

Poverty is an outrage against humanity. It robs people of dignity, freedom and hope, of power over their own lives. Christian Aid has a vision – an end to poverty – and we believe that vision can become a reality. We urge you to join us.

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