

SABI Learning Paper

SABI: GESI, Power, Politics and COM-B

21 April 2021



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Acknowledgements:

Thanks to SABI programme managers, partners and citizen's perceptions – also gratitude to UK Aid for funding an innovative and adaptive programme.

Christian Aid exists to create a world where everyone can live a full life, free from poverty. We are a global movement of people, churches and local organisations who passionately champion dignity, equality and justice worldwide. We are the change makers, the peacemakers, the mighty of heart.

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Cover: A youth accountability volunteer works with the local community to collect data and support them to demand improved services in their area. (Tom Dixon/Christian Aid)

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Available for download: <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/about-us/programmes/sabi-sierra-leone#review>

1. SABI introduction and Learning Questions

SABI is an inclusive, citizen-led, accountable governance programme that is focused on improved service delivery for some of the poorest communities. It has a national remit, operating in all 16 districts of Sierra Leone, where it supports communities to generate evidence of citizens' perceptions of services, and to share this evidence widely within communities, with the local government authorities and upwards to the national government. The aim is to inspire and demand action to resolve issues identified at a local services level and in related terms at national government policy response. This model is very aware of powerful actors and political dynamics in Sierra Leone who hold sway and influence over how health, education, economic development, and environmental/infrastructural programmes are delivered.

Christian Aid is the lead of the consortium, which includes Restless Development, Social Development Direct, and Humentum. Christian Aid Sierra Leone leads delivery through partnership with local partner agencies - FOCUS 1000, RADA, SEND and SLSAV.¹

The SABI programme has a series of learning questions identified, informed by the SABI Annual Report 2019-20, and plans for the follow-on extension phase 2020-21, aimed at generation of deeper understanding, to challenge assumptions and to advance the model as part of programming. This paper focuses on the specific learning questions detailed below, as the main programme completes 4 years of highly rated A+ delivery (and closes out in extension period).

The central question to be addressed by this research and learning paper is:

To what extent has the 'SABI way' of working, used a particular combination of power, political economy, embedded GESI analysis and COM-B to promote and support inclusive and accountable governance?

This will be explored in the following sections through examples of integrated analysis that have been explored with key informants and using case study materials. These examples are at community level linking to District and national or macro level.

Three sub-questions:

1. What **form this took**
2. What **features of SABI's approach** have been more or less successful?
3. **How has this approach stimulated or contributed** to government/ service providers behaviour change – example could be influencing at national service summit or WDCs SOPs/ ID cards or the Charter

“SABI recognises the integral role that communities played in the fight against Ebola and presents an important opportunity for accountability programming. By once again placing communities at the forefront, SABI builds on the potential to make significant shifts in the role of citizens and the responsiveness of the state for improved service delivery in Sierra Leone. Gender, equality, and social inclusion are central to the programme. SABI will ensure vulnerable and excluded groups have the skills and support they need to become active agents of change in their communities. SABI will contribute towards creating a more informed and empowered citizenry which can hold effective and ongoing dialogue with better engaged and more accountable state service providers.” (SABI website)

Finally there are recommendations based on the answers to these three sub-questions for future programming/ further research and learning: A supplementary learning/ uptake question may be useful to explore – the link back to learning from ENCISS as a fore-runner of SABI – is there a line of learning and building on good practice established under ENCISS – and a link forward to proposed future programming based on need for social accountability and evidence based scrutiny to enhance service delivery reform?

Glossary of key approaches - Unpacking the jargon:

GESI:	Gender Equality Social Inclusion analysis using tools for measuring inequalities, gender, and other exclusion factors
GESI Scans	To assess knowledge, attitudes and behaviours within SABI itself – the Christian Aid SABI team, Social Development Direct as well as the implementing partners (IPs) and grantees.
Inclusive Approach	the process of ensuring that everyone, regardless of gender, age or other dimension of diversity is treated equitably and given fair and free opportunity
Forms of Power: Power over/ Power to/ Power with/ Power within Faces of power: – Visible/ Hidden/ Invisible	Power over v Transformative Power Spaces of power Types of power – Knowledge/ Resource/ Personal/ Positional
Political Economy Analysis:	How politics is organised - the economy of politics analysed in terms of root-cause problems, economic institutions/stakeholder, incentives, bargaining processes
PDIA:	Problem-driven, iterative and adaptive

COM-B: Capability, Opportunity, Motivation – Behaviour change Model

To influence long-term behaviour change, increased capabilities and opportunities can influence motivation/ incentives

<http://sabi-sl.org/com-b/>

SABI Sierra Leone - Christian Aid

https://social-change.co.uk/files/02.09.19_COM-B_and_changing_behaviour_.pdf

2. Methods

Methods used

Literature review and desk research.	Use of programme reports and FCDO feedback
Review of original FCDO Business Case and CA Consortium Proposal	Theory of Change and Key Questions methodology will investigate and explore any evidence of how and to what effect the analysis methods were followed and impacted upon the success of the programme. Failures and challenges will also be identified.
Theory of Change	Case examples will be explored in retrospect
Toolkit/ Programme Manual	Key Informant Interviews with consortium members, programme staff, partner representatives

Process and contribution tracing discussions helped to cross-check on contributory factors although community level cross-checking requires a further stage of analysis and research. The methodology aimed to be participatory and inclusive applying the principles of GESI strategy but it was difficult given the restrictions of Covid-19 to move beyond online calls with staff from SABI, Christian Aid and consortium members and implementing partners. It will require a further stage of this learning project to hold participatory focus groups to cross-check and validate findings - these could be implemented / run by partners, Christian Aid programme field staff and volunteers in future.

3. SABI Way: Power, GESI and COM-B – theory and practice

3.0 The SABI Way

The SABI Way was described by the SABI programme staff as a means of putting the community at the front of their own development, making sure the communities have the power, the technique and the skill they need with the power and capability to work with government and other stakeholders to solve their challenges. This enables them to identify and engage those responsible for delivering services and help them to understand how they can contribute to the solutions. Using the GESI, Power and COM-B analysis all worked together to achieve that, making sure all the different members of the community

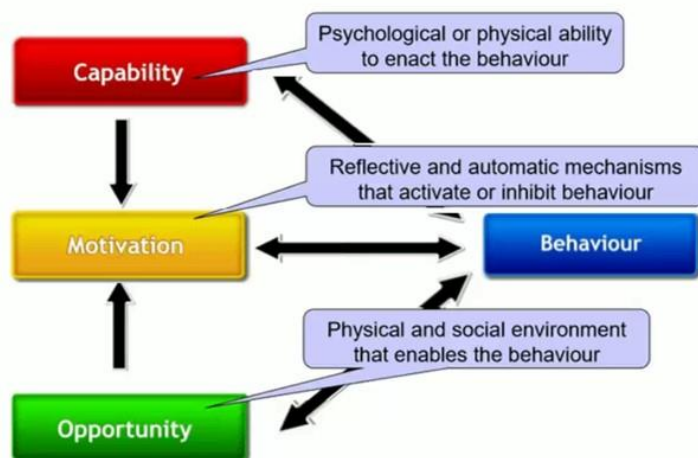
had a different role to play in identifying their problems, engaging power holders and contributing themselves to changing their lives for the better.

The SABI team developed its identity as the SABI Way to ensure consistency and quality. It was clearly spelled out in their Programme Handbook that provided a standard set of methods that could be consistently followed and applied in practice. But it was known as the 'SABI Way' principally because these were the key programmatic aspects and approaches that worked for them, in their context.

- The GESI approach is outlined on the [SABI Sierra Leone - Christian Aid](#) site and the various approaches are explained in detail on the <http://sabi-sl.org/> site. It is an empowerment approach that takes GESI Gender equality and social inclusion very seriously. The GESI approach has been described as being built into the brickwork of the programme. The programme partners live out this approach as well making it a truly GESI embedded programme.
- Power and GESI analyses are then mixed with a clear and smart political economy analysis to fully ground the programme accountability interventions in the local, regional and national political realities. Power Analysis is fused with political analysis in an effort to understand the power dynamics and relationships between key stakeholders, duty-bearers, non-governmental actors such as NGOs and traditional/ informal governance modalities.
- COM-B: a behavioural change analytical framework that consider capabilities, opportunities and motivation – considers power, capacity, salience, magic moments, interests and dynamics alongside behaviour change results.
- Integrated GESI, politics and power analysis - mixed with COM-B in a strategic attempt to understand how behaviour changes in responsiveness and transparency, accountability and service policy review.

Below: The SABI COM-B Model

COM-B Model



Michie et al (2011) *Implementation Science*
See p59 BCW Guide

3.1 Power Analysis, PEA, GESI and COM-B

The Theory

SABI connects community or organisational psychology approaches in GESI scanning and COM-B to the personal and social empowerment approaches that the programme uses in operations.

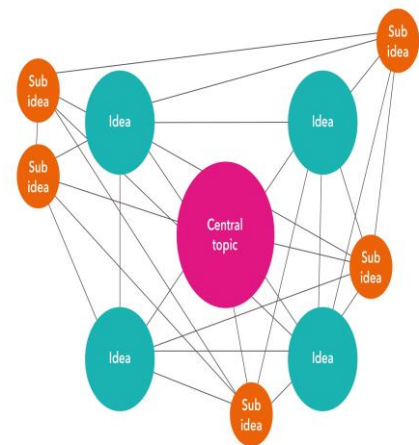
SABI has sought to apply an integration and embedding of Political Economy Analysis (PEA), Power Analysis and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Analysis (GESI). This blended approach applies (and translates for context) traditional PEA lines of enquiry such as root cause problem analysis, stakeholder analysis, incentives and bargaining processes. Through this SABI approach Christian Aid and SDDirect sought to examine how gender and other social inequalities shape development challenges, outcomes and access to power and resources. The social, physical, environmental, and attitudinal barriers and enablers could also be detailed and better understood.

While there are fundamental links between GESI and Power Analysis and PEA, they are typically conducted separately, and the potential complementarities are often missed. A PEA understanding of politics and visible power in a specific context tends to overlook the relevance of gender and social exclusion as well as personal agency. Christian Aid's approach considers political institutions and the political economy alongside less tangible, invisible and hidden forms of power, personal behaviours, norms, ideology, and beliefs as pervasive systems of power. Conversely, traditional GESI analysis often has a limited focus on the formal systems and actors that can be critical gatekeepers to achieving positive change for women and marginalised groups.

Gender Equality, Social Inclusion, Power and Politics analysis was fundamental to the original offer laid out by Christian Aid in the SABI programme proposal (building on the UK Government FCDO Business Case which required smart political analysis and GESI as a fundamental building block of inclusive voice and accountability):

- For Christian Aid this offer was based on a Power Programme Practice² guidance with a very strong focus on power analysis that recognises the limits of PEA and instrumental political analysis, while stressing the need for structural shifts in power dynamics if any meaningful long-term change is to be made.
- SABI also built on the concept of 'transformative power' developed by JASS³ and others that values dignity, equity, inclusion, liberation, and democratic leadership.
- This theoretical framing influenced the SABI team as they adapted theory to their own context: they considered the constructs of *power within*, *power to* and *power with* in processes of

Below: Power analysis



empowerment. But they also had the very focused sense that JASS names as ‘power for’: the vision, values and demands that set the course for building citizen-led change movements.

- Onto this model they added an analysis and decision-making tool that is based in the need to understand the drivers and barriers of behaviour change in the COM-B model.
- Data gathering from communities and evidence-based accountability was another major feature required by FCDO building on the lessons from ENCISS and other programmes in Sierra Leone which had identified an evidence gap. Christian Aid proposed that data should be presented differently in SABI by using power analysis, **‘politically smart’** use of quantitative and qualitative data and robust GESI analysis. The plan was to identify plausible entry points and ways of working on gender, inclusion and power dynamics that are closely linked to the political economy analysis.

A challenge was to establish a pattern and way of working that embedded different analytical and monitoring, evaluation and learning tools that are required for GESI and power analysis, along with the COM-B and a rigorous PEA. SABI has shown how the operational arrangements within programme teams, consortium working and the implementing partners’ mode of operations has contributed to **genuinely gender-responsive and inclusion-centred analysis and decision-making and responsive, accountable behaviours.**⁴

3.2 What is the SABI Way in practice?

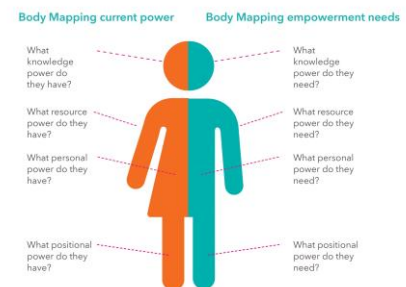
In practice we can see that the SABI team developed the programme’s own ‘way’ through its approach and operating guidelines at community level and its mode of engagement at national level.

The SABI Way began with power analysis training that was then written in to the implementing partner and community level way of analysing problems and finding solutions. A smart understanding of political economy layered on top of this to inform the wider strategic context and decision-making. GESI analysis was then rolled out early and in detail. Finally, a COM-B analysis was brought in to provide much more detailed understanding of how the programme was identifying the available power that the communities already had, how they need to enhance their capabilities, the opportunities that presented for change and the motivation of key actors and stakeholders.

SABI analysed how people can exercise their power to participate as individuals and as citizens:

- Power relations analysis helped the communities to identify their problems and existing resources in health and other basic services
- Problem Priority Matrix helped communities prioritise – power mapping process showed them who to influence and how – as a design for their Action Planning

Below: Power analysis, body mapping



Key elements of the SABI Way:

Title of table: Key elements of the SABI Way

SABI implementing partners supported community leadership to amplify voice and raise up issues to Ward level, District Council level and onwards (micro to meso to macro).	People with disabilities learned about their entitlement to free medical care at local health facilities so this changed their understanding of how to approach health services.
SABI showed the communities that they could and should utilise the existing laws and policies ('it's a right not a privilege') and once that policy literacy was established, they were able to organise and start tracking service delivery e.g. in health services.	Information access and awareness of entitlements as a vital part of problem identification and analysis
Community leaders and monitors could start, for example, to track drug supplies that seemed to be missing or insufficient.	A sense of agency and voice as a basis on which identified problems could be articulated and a plan of advocacy formulated.

Engaging with politics and power: from the onset SABI presented a non-adversarial and politically neutral approach to the accountability process.

Citizen Perception Surveys (CPS)

An example of this can be seen in how SABI conducted Citizen Perception Surveys (CPS) that gauged the experience of service delivery and governance. The findings of these CPS were always shown to frontline service providers, Ward Development Councils, chiefdom structures and district councils before they were shared with communities. This meant that they would be able to prepare responses to any questions from the public during the open community presentations of the CPS findings that followed. This built trust with local authorities rather than confrontation. Of course the relationships between citizens and leaders in local communities began to be disturbed as citizens started asking questions about the poor quality of services they could clearly see. As the SABI Field Officers were in the front line of this situation, they took great care to avoid being labelled as 'trouble makers'. The extensive use of senior government functionaries during policy literacy sessions to clarify policy positions, helped in cooling down any tensions presented from the CPS examples of service challenges or failures. So the political challenges presented by this engagement with local leaders, duty bearers and service providers, were addressed through a carefully planned process of engagement with citizens.

SABI supported communities and citizens groups to engage with local authorities and service providers with a solutions-focused attitude. Councillors who engaged with the information and policy literacy sessions often found that even they did not fully understand the official process or bureaucratic hurdles for making planning or policy changes or for bringing in local investments in infrastructure or services. For example, few people in the community or in local authorities understood the complexity of School Approvals whereby a local community or unofficial school could become officially adopted by the Ministry of Education and approved for teachers, budget and materials. Similarly there was little appreciation among those advocating for a health clinic or pharmacy of the need to produce realistic and robust data on medicine supply needs, number of people requiring medication, types of drugs, storage and management of the supply.

The local Councillors were briefed on these details along with the District Council Chairpersons and Deputy Directors of services (DDs), and they were supported in asking the right questions or engaging with the correct procedures. So gradually the officials and elected representatives started appreciating the Field Officers and came 'on-side' with the local demands rather than seeing them as merely criticism. This helped to overcome the political relational difficulties and sense of opposition by becoming more collaborative. The information and policy literacy worked at community level (for rights holders) but also at local authority level (supporting the duty-bearers to deliver – the 'demanders and the deliverers'). Those in power started to be seen by the communities, by individual citizens, and by the local NGOs (as well as their fellow officials or elected representatives horizontally influencing) as delivering and getting results.

The GESI approach was important in these relationships as the programme insisted on women attendance at meetings (a minimum number of women and persons with disabilities was required) and this meant that their participation was gradually developed from very low/ non-existent levels to a regular contribution, consultation and clear understanding that 'nothing about them without them' was the standard. This did not always flow smoothly but significant progress has been made, as has been noted in the SABI GESI scans⁵ supported by consortium partner SDDirect.

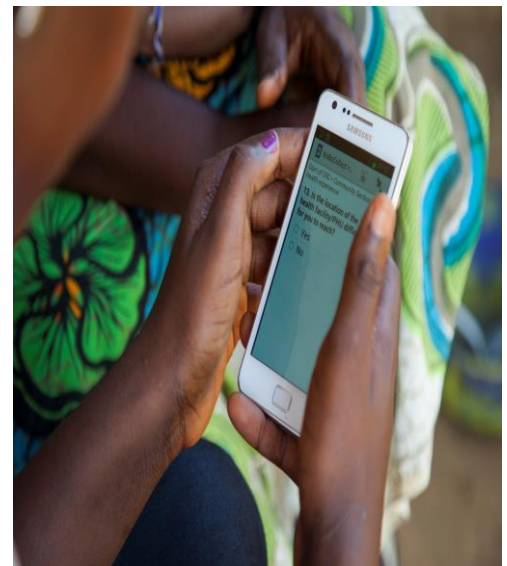
Power analysis proved a useful tool at this stage to clearly understand who might hold the ability or power to make changes that the community groups identified as necessary e.g. in tracing the supply of drugs and medicines to local clinics and pharmacies and who was responsible for policy, delivery and scrutiny of the supply chain.

COM-B was then used to answer why given the right policies or awareness that the service quality level were not being achieved.

Action Plans were central to the community response to identified problems based on evidence gathered. When there was no response to the Action Plans (prioritised inclusive community demands for change in policy, practice, budget and resources), COM-B was a useful analytical lens to understand the reasons: low capacity to respond, little motivation or lack of political or social opportunity for change at that moment in time?

COM-B analysis (as outlined in 3.1 above) can be used to identify why there is no change, who might be more likely to change and how behaviour could be influenced. This was tied in with the existing and regularly updated team reviews of power analysis and dynamics between key actors, and government departments etc alongside a smart understanding and reading of the political economy. In this way COM-B cut across everything that was done and helped programme decision-making. Strategic decisions were required in response to emerging problems and changing political context. For example, with more detailed knowledge and information on level of drugs stockage, medicine supplies, need for types and quantities of resources and pharmaceutical supplies, the Facility Management Committees became more able to monitor the drug levels and with increased and more effective monitoring. This led to less tension with local officials or duty bearers because the services were

Below: Data collection in the SABI programme (Christian Aid/Tom Dixon).



operating more efficiently. As a result, more people felt confident to attend Antenatal services because they had increased confidence that there will be drugs and supplies available to treat them. The COM-B aspects of the problem were addressed alongside this improved scrutiny, for example, the nursing staff were more motivated in their professional roles; while the local leaders became more likely to receive praise for improved services.

Regular review of GESI scans and the Action Plans developed by the communities was led by SABI Programme Officers with support from SDDirect, to support the quarterly review of the GESI plans with the Implementing partner. This process is built into the quarterly reporting tool and monitoring template. The reviews told the staff what is working in the partners daily activities and how sensitive is their practice in implementing the GESI approach.

Regular strategy reviews/ Action Plan reviews worked alongside the COM-B analysis during regular Theory of Change sessions every six months. These reviews questioned the assumptions made in the programme design and operations and provided information, for example, about the community needs, about the usefulness of/ need for more trainings or capacity building or about the reactions of duty-bearers to the SABI activities. The reviews asked challenging questions and aimed for a wider set of supporting activities such as more coaching, support in technical way, some small push to improve engagement etc. This helped to adapt the programme tactics or even strategy and helped the programme staff to identify the right interventions in the context they were facing. Power analysis came alongside this to ensure the right persons were being targeted and the right officials (who have the authority to make changes etc). The answers were not always about asking for more money or increased share of the budget but sometimes a change of tactic in how existing support was delivered or a different focus on the latent resources in the communities (indeed it has become harder to spend budget in community work since Corona Virus way of working in 2020).

3.3 Features of SABI's approach that has been more or less successful?

The elements of the SABI way have generally been seen as successful in the regular programme reports, case studies and mid-term review. FCDO have given SABI an A+ score in annual reviews reflecting that it has achieved beyond what was expected of it. This section asks how the SABI team and partners managed to overcome the identified risk in the Theory of Change, that the programme might lead to frustration on the part of citizens, if they felt that their voice heard is not being heard because they do not see any action or improvements, and/or their demands meet with little response or interest from duty bearers.

The elements of the SABI way have generally been seen as successful in the regular programme reports, case studies and mid-term review. FCDO have given SABI an A+ score in annual reviews reflecting that it has achieved beyond what was expected of it.

The programme at first encountered and had to overcome a sense of resignation and powerlessness in communities. However, the programme built on learning from previous Christian Aid programmes such as ENCISSE⁶ (also funded by UK government) where there had been many successes in engaging citizens, and from other social accountability programmes in Christian Aid such as the Irish Aid funded Governance Programme⁷ So SABI deliberately approached the problems of poor services and weak accountability in governance by building in efforts for accountable and responsive behaviour by duty bearers and service providers.

Stories of Change

SABI has recorded a number of stories of change that outline the way in which communities have used CPS evidence and data to help make their case and rally support for improved roads, schools and hospitals among others. All of these examples have involved the community realising their power and engaging with key duty bearers or service providers with the ability to invest or fund the required changes. Often there is a degree of community self-help and the long-term changes have been driven by the local community activism. The SABI Way certainly is designed to provoke this sustainable and community-centred change.

The starting point has almost always been with the Implementing Partners (RADA, SLSAV, SEND) who are social development CSOs working with the local community to understand their problems. For example, in Mayolo in Bombali District the community experienced problems with access to health services due to lack of a local clinic to serve their population. They prioritised this as a much-needed resource and then demanded and worked for a PHU (Primary Health Unit or clinic) to be constructed. They were able to demonstrate that they qualified to have one as per government standards.

Problem analysis and evidence: Firstly the youth volunteers organised by Restless Development supported the Citizen Survey (CPS) which produced evidence of need for a PHU clinic. The CPS data showed the problems with accessing primary health as experienced by the local communities, while this was backed up by other local informants such as the nurse at the nearest clinic. She complained of being overwhelmed with levels of demand and lacking a clinic to work from (using church and other buildings). Following problem analysis sessions with the community and reflecting on the data evidence from CPS (the programme used low literate infographics to relate complex data information), decisions were taken as to prioritised issues. It should be noted that SABI has an inclusive 'all voices count' focus in decision-making to ensure a wide variety of sections of the community can take part in decisions rather than only the male elders of the community. So the whole community were encouraged to sit down to map out the key actors, what they can do to solve the problem and also to look at available resources. The local community had capacity to start construction of a clinic building but they could not achieve the technical specifications or finalise to an appropriate standard. They needed the local authority to approve the facility, recruit additional staff, order required drugs supplies and manage storage facilities, indeed the many official regulations and standards laid down clearly for a health clinic. The community firstly engaged with their local councillor, Honourable MP and the DHMT (District Health Management Team). They showed that they could clear ground and construct basic foundations but only to a basic level. After a certain stage they had to gain additional funds to finish construction, as well as information and knowledge on standards and regulations for adequate development of a PHU. The DHMT sent an assessor to inspect and advise on the formal requirements. The SABI programme had already collected data from the local community as to population, distance from other health clinics, local needs and demand, and inadequacies (through perception surveys) of the current health services.

Power and Politics: in the beginning it wasn't easy to get any traction or real interest from the authorities, perhaps because the community lacked power or political muscle, but the data helped them to begin to make a case. It took several meetings to identify who had the power and influence to make decisions regarding new PHUs.

The programme used a high-level PEA analysis that gave them essential information as to services provision and political priorities. They also used a close understanding of power dynamics in their work particularly linked to advocacy for key decision makers or officials/ elected representatives that would be able to open up the route to resources or priority status for service improvements as per policies laid down. [the analysis was not strictly PEA although high level PE reports by DFID from 2017 at programme

inception, did inform the programme design and early direction; but PEA was present in SABI in terms of deep and close political reading of the context, opportunities that came from newly elected government, new powerful Ministers seeking gains by linking their departmental planning and policy to SABI data e.g. secondary education programmes (SHS) see example below]

GESI approach: a major problem with developing the community Action Plan was the tradition of exclusion of women from the process of engagement or influence. Indeed not all the men had the same standing according to traditional ways of community organising. Some younger men or those not members of secret societies were not regarded as adults so their voice could not be heard. PWDs and people with leprosy were stigmatised because of traditional beliefs so they were also excluded from the community demands and engagement with authorities. A power and GESI analysis focused on Paramount Chiefs as key stakeholders with major influence over the way in which all voices should be heard. A training plan was organised involving local leaders and officials. This helped them to change their approach and subsequently some of the Chiefs committed to change their practice to allow wider participation of youth and women etc. SABI followed up this commitment and supported the Chiefs to promote a more inclusive approach. That led to invites being sent out to all sections of the community to have their voice heard and state their priorities and needs. So the GESI approach was modelled by a few leaders who saw that it produced positive results and led to wider acceptance. Women, youths and PWDs were specifically suggested to the Chiefs to be included on the Action Plan as 'responsible': this gave them status in the project and raised their profile as people to be dealt with and included in decision-making; to ensure these groups were able to have their voice heard and play a role that could be tracked as part of the plan. This suggestion for change and the subsequent demonstration by the involvement of women and PWDs etc that they can help to move forward and gain buy-in from the wider community showed that this inclusion process worked. The training and practice helped the Chiefs to overcome their reservations and prejudices and make a start on embedding these new practices.

COM-B: The COM-B analysis helped the community and the local leaders to understand what they could do to change the current situation, and the opportunities they were faced with. Their engagement with the SABI programme supported them to organise a training that could help them understand how to incentivise the authorities to change behaviour and improve services as required. GESI, power and political economy considerations and contextual analysis were fed through a COM-B analysis in each case to make assessments on tactics and strategy to pursue the required change of behaviour (increased interest from authorities and prioritisation of health, education etc projects).

3.4 How has this approach stimulated or contributed to government/ service providers behaviour change to promote and support more inclusive and accountable governance

The SABI programme has come up against structural problems related to service delivery that stem from poor intra-governmental relations and engrained problems of administration, accountability and political discord between central and local government. This posed the problem for the SABI programme that all their COM-B analysis might produce good immediate and medium-term results but in the longer term merely amount to a tinkering with the system in a way that was not sustainable (for

a report on sustainability of actions please see the SABI Sustainability Report⁹). To address this risk in their strategic approach they had to engage as a team with power dynamics and political relations within government and between government and citizens. The accountability deficit from central MDAs to local government meant that financial/ budget disbursements didn't come in a timely fashion. Decentralisation doesn't work well without reliable resource flows because a lack of trust and engagement between levels of government and between government and citizens results. A lack of citizen desire or motivation to engage with government can be very low due to giving up hope of required resources or prioritised plans with a sense of no influence over the system). The integrated SABI Way approach provided solutions and learning is being gathered and consolidated in this final stage of the programme to ensure that structural change can be a result for the longer term.

Power and political analysis: helped the programme and communities to make realistic assessments of salience and traction for the prioritised problems; and a recognition that not all obvious problems will find political support and therefore priority, due to a number of factors beyond the communities' influence or the programme's control (for example central government shift of resources from health to agriculture meaning less budget available, or a health pandemic such as Covid-19 altering the operation of the health system)

Other power relationships might be very significant and within the programme's sphere of influence, for example there will be a problem of how local authorities relate to central ministries and agencies if a councillor who heads the local health committee is not a good English speaker. MDAs might not be open to influence without support from programmes such as SABI because the government do not make information available and communicate in local languages. So this immediately sets up a barrier in communication and effectiveness. SABI supported a shift in power relations by supporting the community to relate the local problems. For example, the issue of gaining approval for a secondary school is complex enough without the added barrier of communicating in the manner prescribed by the Ministry responsible. There may also be no smooth process for getting prompt responses to demands and presentation of evidence so communities may simply find their issue are left untouched. SABI staff and community organisers helped bridge this gap and work to resolve problems at district council levels. There is a clear need for capacity building and training for official and councillors but also a recognition of need to use other languages but change to a revised system will continue to take time and pressure from SABI-like programmes.

But there is also a significant barrier in the lack of understanding of the relations and dynamics between the various power holders as to who holds the key to structural

Below: Community mapping in SABI. (Christian Aid/Prince Kenneh).



change. As the programme has progressed the staff knew that there were opportunities for change and SABI has helped analyse and guide both communities and local officials/ councillors etc on how to get better at taking these opportunities (where to go, who to engage, what motivations for change)?

It was strategic and useful to hold National Service Summit to address some of the national policy level gaps and gain greater commitment to change. These summits can help bring people together to resolve problems of communication and accountability.

GESI analysis: there has been less evidence of useful GESI analysis in terms of altering accountable and responsive behaviours. Despite the GESI strategy and GESI scans that looked at the organisational GESI scores of the programme and its partners, there was limited opportunity to engage GESI issues with the authorities. This can be identified as a gap and will be addressed in detail in recommendations. On GESI changes there is a real need to build the motivation and desire from the community level but equally the central government has low capacity, little time and limited interest in checking how services are delivered at local level in GESI sensitive ways, let alone auditing its own GESI ways of operation! A gender sensitive and inclusive social contract is required to link duty bearers with women and men, youth and members of excluded and marginalised groups in a way that services can be properly monitored.

Interaction of Political analysis and COM-B challenges:

There are many and varied challenges around the political and bureaucratic motivations for change: some of the council officials or elected representatives are very politically focused and so they tend to be keen to push their own parties priorities rather than looking at wider community demands; while some officials were not willing to engage with the SABI Way because the programme had a policy of not paying per diems for attendance at meetings or workshop sessions. But the programme still tried to reach out to them to show the value of helping them to fulfil their responsibilities.

SABI produced the CPS data on the community/ service needs, helped assess the community resources available and the opportunities and challenges in service delivery improvements. All the planning and chief officials were invited to engage with this report and many did. Officials could help review the CPS evidence, help clarify and support the mapping on what was missing in terms of resources and capacity at the local council levels. so the community and the council came together and in many cases the council accepted SABI data, recommendations, demands from the communities and concrete additions to the District Development Plans.

Data and Power: The extent of data-driven and digital evidence-based accountability activities are being assessed in

Below: GESI



engagement in Komrabai Nyollah Community, PortLoko District. (Christian Aid/Prince Kenneh)

So the learning seems to be that where the data is community based, trusted and delivered well to decision makers and power holders, then that data/ evidence can change the dynamics in accountability

final evaluation reports, but it is worth noting here that the programme staff believe that the power dynamic shifts were partly brought about by data availability and evidence that was useful for both the community demands and the duty bearer's decisions. It seems that in some cases the local leaders were grateful for the data as back-up for their case (see example below) and the district council or MDA staff or even MPs might have been happy to use the data as it eased their path to providing the service improvements they desired. Political wins played a part in this undoubtedly to the extent that the COM-B analysis shows when there is an incentive for a politician to implement policy promises. So the learning seems to be that **where the data is community based, trusted and delivered well to decision makers and power holders, then that data/evidence can change the dynamics in accountability relationships**. The SABI programme tried to focus in specific sectors which appeared to have salience or priority, (particularly with regard to health, education, social protection and infrastructure related) from both demand and policy sides so it is difficult to apply this rule to less popular areas of policy. Further sectoral research into greater uptake and acceptance of community-generated data in service provision decision-making is no doubt required⁹

An example of integrated analysis and action can be seen in the case study of Panderu KMDEC School:

Panderu KMDEC School

SEND/SABI Programme field officer supported chiefdom leaders and Ward Development committee Members to develop an action plan to resolve challenges that were affecting the education sector in Ward 45, Nongowa Chiefdom. The issue of inadequate classrooms was identified as a major challenge in Panderu KMDEC school. The issue was identified in the community action plans facilitated by Restless Development which was also captured in the development of the ward action plan. The policy literacy activities and Power Mapping tool and the REAL Recommendations¹⁰ created a lot of awareness on citizens' rights and responsibility, also the utilization of resources such as school subsidies, chiefdom development funds and corporate social responsibilities of multinational companies. The accountable governance referral pathways that were mapped out in each context also triggered insight on how ward stakeholders should be channelling communities' challenges to service providers. Base on the widen awareness, ward stakeholders, school authorities and the school management committee suggested using the school subsidies and Performance Based Finance (PBF). so, a meeting was summoned by the ward councillor to discuss the issue. At the meeting, the head teacher presented the challenges to the community people and briefed them on what they had already discussed during the action plan development which was to utilize part of the school subsidies and part of the PBF. From his statement during the meeting, the youth leader Isiaka John said *"it is an impressive and proactive step you have taken and we the people will give you our full support as long it is for the development of the community and the ward at large"*. In addition, the town chief Abdulai Ngaogia also said *"we will support the initiative with open hands and make sure that our supports are tangible"*. At the end of the meeting, a consensus agreement was met to utilize the school subsidies and PBF to buy imported materials whiles the town chief and youth

leader vowed to provide local materials and in addition with labour for moulding bricks for the extension of the school.

The councils saw SABI as a resource in developing these plans, particularly the Ward Development Committee members were assisted in knowledge and skills that could help them have a platform to make budget demands that were more definite, with budget items specified, costs of infrastructure or staff and other details more defined and better articulated. This made their voice and demands stronger. And made them more effective in the eyes of their communities.

SABI has had success but is it always so straight forward – so successful? What about bad practice or corruption etc?

PHU Case Study

Programme staff shared an example of Bonthe Island visit with FCDO to investigate why the local community has been charged for health services (that's should have been provided free) and why they had not been getting the drugs at their local PHU. When the community learned they had been overcharged they immediately asked for their money/ fees to be refunded. The local nursing and healthcare staff were able to make the case for charging patients in an attempt to understand the problem and where the problematic issues really lay. The nurse was charging the community members because sometimes the staff had to use their own money for fuel to get to the community. They also covered the cost of getting health cards for the patients who had none. This was paid for out of the nurse's pocket so the nurse argued that this was a fair way for her to recoup the money she had paid out herself.

SABI ensured that the nurse's manager was involved in the visit and the analysis was reported straight to them as they had more power over making changes and monitoring future improvements in providing resources for the nursing staff to use for their work. The clear lessons was that the district was not funding the PHU properly – and the COM-B analysis, stakeholder identification and relationship analysis along with the smart political scrutiny meant that these efforts on Bonthe Island started a lobby for improved funding of the service from higher levels. This meant pushing the case back up the vertical chain of command and accountability rather than engaging in a blame game at the local level that was unlikely to change the underlying problem.

3.5 Challenges?

There is a major challenge in linking district authorities to national level Ministries. SABI has faced difficulties with lack of time to really do the intensive work that has been achieved in connecting communities to districts. The linkage problem seems to be a combination of government changes (an election took place and government changed) which led to the need to reengage across the board; the inertia of MDAs to get things done; and Covid-19 challenges. Many of these problems and issues were beyond SABI sphere of influence or control:

- **Political and power challenges:** SABI believes the big gap between MDAs, national service providers and the district councils requires an effective coordination mechanism to allow MDAs and district councils to work in tandem. Resource constraints has affected prioritisation for councils as well as MDAs. Lately, the emergence of Covid-19 has diverted attention from other issues. The traditional

way of working has been top down with instructions being handed down to be carried out without sufficient engagements to allow for input coming upwards. National ministries, agencies or officials don't realise or understand the lack of knowledge and low level of consultation with the communities and even the councillors in the districts. Sometimes they don't understand how big the gap is so there is a need to do more on that bridging and engagement. There is a clear need for analysis and support on how to bridge it. SABI has started doing this and held national service summits etc but there is a challenge in terms of political perceptions.

There is a big problem in developing the platform for districts to communicate their demands to national level.

- **COM-B:** helped the team and partners think and work through the problems lying behind this poor accountability relationship asking, 'why not??' This approach stimulated a degree of government/ service providers behaviour change as can be seen by results from influencing at national service summit or Ward Development Committees' Standard Operating Procedures/ ID cards.

Accountable behaviour changes have been attested to by government officials, elected representatives and powerful individuals and agencies in change stories and quarterly reports – for example the draft Guidance that was developed by officials on school approval. This was a result of the strategic engagement with the ministry of education, following the discovery that the process was complex and little understood¹¹

Sustainability of power, political, GESI and COM-B analysis approach: it is important to note and caveat these change attestations with the deep and debilitating weakness of local government in Sierra Leone. There is substantial churn of highly skilled staff with the risk, for the SABI programme, of good performers and 'change-makers' moving on to other jobs or a complete turnover of councillors or staff and the loss of local gains when replaced by people who have not been through the change process. As referenced earlier in this paper there is a Sustainability Learning Paper¹² which examines the sustainability of activities beyond the life of SABI. A key recommendation linked to this caveat is that the programme should focus more on budgets as a way of increasing the prospects for sustainability. The Sustainability Paper makes the point correctly that **"budget work can strengthen the sustainability of action planning in governance programmes** – from local budget mapping, to district revenue-generation initiatives, to SABI national partnerships with budget coalitions or programmes".

This paper adds the need for a sustainable source of support for smart power, political, GESI and COM-B analysis approach for both citizens, lower tiers of sub-national government and even the higher-level decision-makers and holders of influence. The learning from the case studies in SABI suggests that simply increasing budgets or increasing citizen scrutiny of budgets (both very important) will not necessarily lead to changes in behaviour or prioritisation of demanded services on the part of duty-bearers and service providers.

The SABI programme was problem-driven and attempted to iterate and adapt (PDIA) based on the Theory of Change (see SABI website). There has been a close working relationship within staff team, FCDO the consortium partners and communities based on the principles of PDIA. This involved ToC reviews, logframe reviews and adapting to issues arising. FCDO has been flexible to pursuing new policy areas, working differently through periods of elections and adapting to the current health crisis due to Covid-19 pandemic. The programme design was not intended to provide a hard and fast, linear blueprint or map for the change to happen, but provided the approaches that equipped people to find their own solutions. In the example of managing the drug supply problem there was an iteration as the programme developed: people started to respond to knowledge of increased drug supply by increased attendance for Antenatal Care services. Their expectations were raised and of course women and men

started to ask different questions and to analyse the problem at different level. The capacity was raised on both sides, demand and supply/ voice and response, and this opened up pathways for solutions based on smart power analysis and problem analysis as the activities progressed.

4. Key Recommendations for use of GESI, Power, Politics and COM-B in Accountability Interventions in Sierra Leone

4.1 Based on learning from the theory and practice – we should further develop this integrated analysis model

Applying the learning on problem analysis, power, GESI and COM-B will a) open up opportunities within the political economy landscape and b) enable communities and civil society organisations that are active in this field to target higher levels of governance. Political economy alone will not get very far because the government has low capacity, little incentive to engage with local councils and communities, and, in policy terms, very low ‘band-width’ to engage on sectoral changes with local authorities and communities is very limited at any given time. These are the realities of political structure in Sierra Leone. However, this integrated approach can identify key entry points, moments of opportunity and the possibility to generate broader coalitions of power and interests. A related result of this can be a more equal and inclusive improvement in service provision, mode of operating and support that can focus on the behaviour change that is really needed (not necessarily more funding or capacity building workshops).

4.2 The SABI programme successfully piloted a model that has delivered positive effects on inclusive and accountable governance

The SABI model seems to have had good successes and acceptance by many government officials and leaders: they have accepted greater and more inclusive citizen participation and engagement; they have drafted community priority demands into their District Development Plans; and ground has been laid for work that will be wider scope, enhanced in scale and inclusive participation. All parties have taken part in the COM-B mapping on what was missing in terms of resources and capacity at the local council levels. National stakeholders were confronted with the realities of services on the ground and could be allied with to use the data and evidence from citizen surveys to create a partnership and collaborative approach. So a change in power dynamics has resulted but how will this piloting of the SABI approach be built upon? How can we apply this with national-level duty-bearers/ government Ministries, agencies, INGOs, service providers and private sector powerholders?

4.3 Sectoral accountability components based on the SABI model can cost effectively be built into future voice and accountability governance work

More projects like SABI (with adaptations and revisions to fit with learning) that can build community participation and work to improve service quality, based on data and community evidence **could now easily be rolled out nationwide** to all communities and districts. Other sectoral issues could be focused on for future accountability attention although health and livelihoods stand out as key issues of the moment in a post-Covid-19 recovery phase coming in 2021. A new phase of community-driven development can seize the gains from the

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early shifts in power relations between citizen and state and if this is the case, then all our sectoral improvement programmes will require a more deliberate application of problem analysis, power and GESI analysis and the use of smart tools like COM-B to make a success of service improvement measures.

SABI builds mobilisation for collective action and incentivises more progressive and responsive policy and governance behaviours. There is a need for a **sustainable source of support for smart power, political, GESI and COM-B analysis approach for both citizens, lower tiers of sub-national government and even the higher-level decision-makers and holders of influence**

4.4 GESI, power, political and COM-B analysis has built on investments from previous programme learning (ENCISS) with best practice established

All of the experience of previous programmes has made communities more resilient – while the introduction of **GESI, power and COM-B approaches has helped people really change**. Looking forward and building on 10 years from now, **COM-B has been a great learning** that has really helped the IPs to overcome challenges: to build community resilience and give the local field staff confidence and tools to perform better. So the learning from SABI must:

- o **keep progressing on the detailed reasons that appear to resolve or delay resolution of problems** from local political economy and power analysis, an approach that requires smart, regular reviews of GESI and a keen understanding (See SABI Learning Paper on Variable Results of Citizen Action for many examples of why more progress in some areas and not others on Action Plans)
- o **COM-B helps understand political intention and will:** this paper has not attempted to tackle the issue of political will as such because COM-B along with power and political analysis, gives us a very detailed understanding of the tactics and strategy needed. Political will is a bigger subject that should be addressed in political analysis and then COM-B allows us to analyse motivations, opportunities and capacity for behaviour change.
- o **Embed the integrated power, politics, GESI and COM-B approach:** sometimes programmes do a lot of training but it doesn't stick; embedding the SABI Way has really helped the staff team to develop, the communities and the stakeholders to look for solutions that might not need financial resources but might be about empowering people to find different ways of making change happen.

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4.5 The SABI Way hugely supported the effectiveness of response to the Corona Virus crisis

The deeper engagement and information avenues that have been built up by SABI has paid off in responding to Covid-19. SABI programme has helped persuade people to come back to attend for MNCH/ ANC services - they all stopped coming because health facilities were suddenly closed - and people were afraid to attend.

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4.6 Lack of national level institutional change suggest need for further follow on investment and scaling up of the model

Despite the GESI strategy and GESI scans that looked at the organisational GESI scores of the programme and its partners, there was limited opportunity to engage GESI issues with the authorities. But see above recommendation to expand work with national-level actors for accountability and change.

In closing out SABI, future plans for programming by Christian Aid and partners – priorities

- **Local MDAs** are in a programme of devolution but they are not accountable to the local councils so this issue needs to be addressed in policy/advocacy terms
- **National to district gap** in terms of incentives, measures of success and political priorities
- **Reform of service delivery at local council level** – solutions to the problems must be sought in a more structural and systemic way to avoid gains being lost
- **Improve horizontal lines of accountability** at different levels (local to national) between MDAs, DC and central government, and the voice and scrutiny of civil society.

Summary Learning/ Recommendations:

- **Applying the learning** on problem analysis, power, GESI and COM-B will a) open up opportunities within the political economy landscape and b) enable communities and civil society organisations that are active in this field to target higher levels of governance.
- Apply this approach with national-level duty-bearers/ government Ministries, agencies, INGOs, service providers and private sector powerholders
- **More projects like SABI** (with adaptations and revisions to fit with learning) that can build community participation and work to improve service quality, based on

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- Other sectoral issues could be focused on for future accountability attention although health and livelihoods stand out as key issues of the moment in post-Covid-19 recovery
- SABI builds mobilisation for collective action and incentivises more progressive and responsive policy and governance behaviours. **There is a need for a sustainable source of support for smart power, political, GESI and COM-B analysis approach for both citizens, lower tiers of sub-national government and even the higher-level decision-makers and holders of influence**
- **All of the experience of previous programmes (ENCISS etc) has made communities more resilient** – while the introduction of **GESI, power, politics, COM-B analysis has helped achieve some lasting impacts.**
- **The deeper engagement and information avenues that have been built up by SABI has paid off in responding to Covid-19.** SABI programme has helped persuade people to come back to attend for MNCH/ ANC services.

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There is a case for further application of this approach by UK FCDO and other donors. SABI has shown that a citizen-led governance and accountability programme will help citizens hold service providers to account with respect to investments being made in health, education and social protection programmes.

End notes

- ¹ SABI website www.sabi-sl.org; and www.christianaid.org.uk/about-us/programmes/sabi-sierra-leone
- ² Christian Aid Power Practice Paper <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/resources/about-us/power-analysis-programme-practice>
- ³ Transformative Power Concept: https://justassociates.org/sites/justassociates.org/files/jass_movement-builders_school_final_report.pdf
- ⁴ <http://sabi-sl.org/understanding-variable-success-citizen-action-plans-better-public-services-sierra-leone/> and SABI Annual Reports on SABI site
- ⁵ SABI website and CA website links to GESI scans
- ⁶ <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/about-us/programmes/enciss>
- ⁷ 'IAPG' <https://www.christianaid.ie/about-us/irish-aid>.
- ⁸ http://sabi-sl.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/SABI-Learning-Review-_Sustainability-Report.pdf
- ⁹ See the work of TAI or the GPSA and Making all Voices Count on data – there is a wide range of requirements to build trust and ethical standards in data – see
- ¹⁰ SABI website for data platform details and protocols used
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PN6ZFgBpk8A> infographics
- ¹¹ <http://sabi-sl.org/category/case-studies/page/2/>
- ¹² http://sabi-sl.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/SABI-Learning-Review-_Sustainability-Report.pdf