Regional Workshop on Democratising Governance through Citizen Participation

Workshop organised by CIVICUS World Alliance for Citizen Participation and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI)

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Section A: Introduction and Overview of Global Trends in Participatory Governance

The regional workshop on democratising governance through citizen participation brought together representatives of civil society organisations, international organisations and participatory governance practitioners from Ethiopia, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia, South Africa and Zimbabwe to share experiences in advancing participatory governance, identify key gaps in participatory governance processes at local, national and continental levels and propose solutions aimed at filling these gaps and making participatory governance effective at all levels.

The first part of the workshop focused on a review of global trends, challenges and good practices in participatory governance. The second part focused on the sharing of experiences on participatory governance by Global Transparency Fund (GTF) Mwananchi Programme partners from six countries in Africa. The third session focused on continental perspectives on participatory governance, looking specifically at the issue of democratic space in an effort to identify key areas where advances can be made to enable more effective participation in governance processes. In the fourth session, participants looked at the dynamics of two key African institutions and ways in which the voices of citizens can influence the decision-making processes of these institutions. The fifth and sixth sessions focused on global perspectives on participatory governance, the use of new technologies to bridge existing gaps and the way forward.

1. Global Trends in Participatory Governance

Participatory governance is about empowering citizens to influence and share control in processes of public decision making that affect their lives. It is both a citizens' right and responsibility and requires new attitudes, skills and relationships on the part of citizens/civil society and state actors. Good governance cannot be achieved by government alone. It requires both capable government *and* active citizenship. One of the core tenets of participatory governance is accountability which is a cornerstone of democracy and good governance.

1.1 Participatory Governance Practices

Participatory governance can occur at all stages throughout the governance cycle. It can take place at community to national level and can be initiated by citizens, CSOs or government actors. It can be undertaken independently or jointly, and can be informal or institutionalised.

Examples of participatory governance practices include: public consultations, covenant signing, policy advocacy, participatory planning, budget transparency initiatives,

independent budget analysis, participatory budgeting, procurement monitoring, participatory expenditure tracking, social audits, citizen charters, citizen report cards, community scorecards and other forms of community monitoring. Ideally, participatory governance practices are evidence-based, solution-oriented and involve direct dialogue and "critical collaboration" between citizens and the state.

If practiced effectively and efficiently, participatory governance brings the following benefits: (i) better governance (i.e. more responsive and accountable government as well as reduced corruption); (ii) enhanced development (i.e. more effective and equitable public policies and services); (iii) citizen empowerment (i.e. stronger citizen voice and more influence) and, finally (iv) increased trust, which leads to enhanced mutual understanding and improved citizen, civil society-state relations.

1.2 Critical Factors

In any given country context, participatory governance initiatives are influenced by a range of factors. These include:

- The enabling environment, which is determined by a range of political, legal, social and cultural factors).
- The willingness and capacity of citizens/CSOs to engage. Key issues include: building citizen knowledge and skills and enhancing the democracy, transparency and accountability of CSOs.
- The willingness and capacity of government to listen and respond to citizens. Key strategies include: nurturing political will for participatory governance (i.e. by introducing both incentives and sanctions).
- The nature of the interface between civil society and the government. Key challenges include creating spaces and mechanisms for citizen participation and transforming civil society government relationships.

Global experience of participatory governance initiatives shows that it is important for civil society practitioners to: emphasise outreach and public mobilisation; strengthen influence through the formation of alliances and multi-stakeholder coalitions; be creative and innovative, and; focus on the needs of marginalised and disadvantaged groups.

Section B: Case Studies from Global Transparency Fund (GTF) Mwananchi Programme Country Partners

Mwananchi Programme partners from six geographically and politically diverse African countries shared experiences in advancing participatory governance in their local and national contexts with a view to discussing solutions to emerging challenges as well as identifying key opportunities to advance civil society's participation in governance processes.

1. Case Study 1 – Information and Communication in Governance - Ghana

Mwananchi Ghana seeks to enhance an understanding and application of and access to information and communication as a basic resource for good governance. The project is implemented in partnership with local organisations in six of the ten regions of the country. It is estimated that approximately 2.5 million people out of a total population of about 20 million will benefit from the project.

Mwananchi Ghana collaborates with nine non-governmental organisations and two community radio stations. Over a period of 13 months, the partners used innovative approaches to support citizens to effectively express their views and interests and hold governments to account at different levels.

The project has focused on the following priorities: firstly, by working with the Ghana National Association of the Deaf, the project has aimed to improve levels of communication with the deaf, challenge preconceived prejudices and educate the public on sign language. Secondly, through BEWDA Ghana, the project has aimed to reduce the bride price expected from the groom which is a common practice in the Bawku traditional area located in the Upper East region of Ghana.

1.1 Basic Needs Ghana

This initiative used photographic documentaries to capture the day-to-day activities of people with mental illness or epilepsy in order to influence mental health policies and practices in Ghana. Mental illness in Ghana has a tendency of eliciting stigma and hence victims are marginalised in society. As a result, levels of recruitment of workers who focus on mental health is low, allocation of budgets for mental health is minimal and there is no formal legislation that specifically addresses issues of mental health.

Through the presentation of compelling images, the project confronted challenges and instigated action from policy makers in government and leaders in communities. The National Coordinating Organisation, PDA, collaborated with BasicNeeds and the Mental Health Society of Ghana to launch a photo book and have a photo exhibition at regional

and national levels. The minister of local government, district chief executives, a cross section of the media and people with mental health illnesses were among those who attended the launch and exhibitions.

In collaboration with the PDA, representatives of mental health self help groups, the Mental Health Society of Ghana and BasicNeeds used the Photo book as a tool for national level engagements with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Ministry of Local Government and Local Development and the Parliamentary Select Committee on Health. The engagement with Parliament took place a week before the Parliamentary Committee met to discuss the Mental Health Bill and during the discussions, aspects of the Bill that needed amendments were highlighted. Members of the committee expressed their willingness to work towards promulgating the Bill.

Extensive collaboration with the media increased public awareness on issues of mental health. There were eight newspaper publications, three television broadcasts and several radio programmes featuring discussions on mental health after the launch and exhibition.

1.2. Key Outcomes

The launch of the photo book, the exhibitions and discussions on the issue of people with disabilities led to the following outcomes; firstly there was an increase in awareness and knowledge of mental health issues among policy makers, elected representations and the general public. Secondly, a reading of the Mental Health Bill was done before the full house in parliament, shortly before the launch of the photo book signifying a huge step forward towards the implementation of the Bill. Thirdly, the Ministry of Health is now making efforts to provide nurses in two districts in the northern region of the country indicating that the government is indeed making attempts to improve mental health services in that part of the country.

1.3 Key Challenges

The following challenges were encountered in the process; first, there was limited access to three psychiatric institutions because of bad publicity at the initial stages of the implementation of the project. This issue was addressed when access, even though limited, to the Pantang and Ankaful psychiatric hospitals was negotiated. Second, an initial disagreement with the professional photographer over ownership of images was resolved following the intervention of the NCO and ODI. And third, funding for advocacy at the national level was not adequate. This challenge was how ever addressed with the provision of supplementary funding from the NCO's project.

1.4 BEWDA Ghana

The project aims to break the myth around the traditional dowry system in Bawku traditional area located in the Upper East region of Ghana. BEWDA is well respected for its role in finding a resolution to the ethnic conflict that has existed in the region for years. The practice requires potential grooms to hand over four cows to the father of the bride and this practice has clear negative implications for women, the girl child and families. Within the context of such a practice, men consider their wives as "commodities" and end of treating them as such. The objective of the project is to reduce the number of cows from four to two with the overall aim of targeting gender issues and promote peaceful co-existence among families.

1.5 Key Activities undertaken

The objectives of the project were introduced to identify communities with the aim of attracting interests from all necessary actors and all members of the traditional council signed a resolution asking for a change in the customary law in line with the objectives of the project. In addition, there was an increase in public awareness through regular radio broadcasts which encouraged listeners to call in and participate. The resolution signed was presented to the president of the regional house by the Paramount Chief of Bawku.

1.6. Achievements and Evidence of Change in Behaviour

- Traditional rulers and community leaders are developing actions towards changing the dowry practice.
- There has been evidence of enhanced participation of other state actors in the process like the Department of Social Welfare.
- Cordial relations persist between BEWDA and the traditional authority.
- The Upper East Regional House of Chiefs committed itself to supporting the achievement of the project objective across the upper eastern region.
- Traditional authorities continue to actively participate and show willingness to support the project.
- Religious leaders continue to raise the issue during sermons which increases awareness and the need to take action.
- Traditional leaders continue to invite BEWDA to participate in their activities
- The media provides a vital avenue for interactive discussions on the subject.
- Victims discuss the issue regularly and publicly and seek support from the public to achieve the objectives of the project.

Glowen Kyei-Mensah making a presentation on information and communication in governance – Ghana

2. Case Study 2 – Leh We Tok – Sierra Leone

The transition from war to peace in Sierra Leone has left deep rooted notions of mistrust and therefore critical engagements are required for reconciliation and confidence building in governance. Formal spaces for citizen engagement are limited and in certain cases, manipulated. However, the notion of participatory governance is evolving in the country, so there are opportunities to learn from various engagements in relation to what is working and who the key players are who can effect change.

2.1 The challenge

The Sierra Leone context presents an uneasy relationship between paramount chiefs and youth in the Kono district in the post conflict period. As an area known for its richness in diamonds, youth blame the paramount chiefs for the underdeveloped nature of communities resulting from unscrupulous mining agreements and environmental degradation. The youth were also concerned about the fact that the chiefs were neither accountable to, nor transparent with their subjects.

On the other hand, the youth were known to be disrespectful towards paramount chiefs who represent a symbol of authority and are custodians of the land. There was

therefore a pressing need to foster peaceful co-existence between the Paramount Chiefs and the youth.

2.2 The Approach used to improve relations between Paramount chiefs and youth

a) **Dialogue**
In the chiefdom, a dialogue forum organised by youth leaders prompted an apology from the youth to the chiefs and created a conducive atmosphere for discussions to be held on renewed engagements. As a result, the paramount chiefs agreed to create the Royal Fund for Youth Capacity Development. Terms of reference were written by the DSL and approved by the chiefs, elders, the Youth Commission and youth leaders. This fund was named the Youth Basket Fund and was aimed at enhancing economic empowerment of the youth.

b) **Working with key interlocutors especially traditional leaders**
Female paramount chiefs in Kenema district now ensure that the perception of people in communities on the opportunities in leadership for men and women is discussed at community forums. The idea of working through interlocutors is useful in bringing change in relations previously seen as strenuous.

c) **The use of interlocutors in the young entrepreneurs' project**

2.3 Bike riders and conflict management in Sierra Leone

Bikes are a preferred means of transportation for large sections of the Sierra Leone population but policy makers, the police and the general public are of the view that bike riders are ex-combatants and generally have no respect for the law. Police used spikes in an effort to force the bike riders from the roads.

There was an understanding initially that only violence will force the bikers off the central business districts and when apprehended, the police extorted huge sums of money from the bikers. On the other hand, the bikes are an alternative and depending on the location, a preferred means of transport employing over 140.000 youth and contributing to the informal economy.

Advocacy by interlocutors through several meetings with bike riders on the one hand and police officers on the other led to some degree of mutual understanding between all the parties. The interlocutors helped in building capacity for the leadership of the unions and facilitated outreach among the membership thereby improving participation and fostering accountability. This led to the establishment of a stakeholders' forum composed of riders, police, traffic wardens and representatives of the local council.

2.4 Key Outcomes

- The relationship built through the forum led the Minister of Internal Affairs to intervene and removed the spikes from the roads. Through the CCYA's engagement, the Bike Riders Association (BRA) was transformed into the Bike Riders Union (BRU) because the former excluded certain sections of bike riders.
- Both the print and electronic media were partners in the process and helped to create an understanding of the various issues surrounding bike riding especially through the Nightline Radio Talk Show
- The union created bike monitors – a peer learning monitoring mechanism to check the conduct of bikers and ensure they adhere to the law. Through this monitoring mechanism, observers are stationed with police at checkpoints to ensure bikers are not exploited and operate within the confines of the law
- Bike riding has now become an issue of national concern and dominates discourses
- The national Youth Commission (NYC) has organised a meeting with key stakeholders and announced they will lead discussions on the integration of bike riders into the transport sector
- The BRU has had several meetings with the Ministry of Transport and Aviation, the Roads Transport Authority, Police and a by-law is currently being drafted
- The NYC has also raised some funds in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to support the CCYA and Green Scenery (a local organisation working on environmental issues) to facilitate the setting up of the national executive of the Bike Riders Union.
- This will bring bike riders across the country to an annual general meeting where they will elect their own leaders who will legitimately advocate on their behalf.

Cross-section of participants at the workshop

3. Case Study 3 – Citizen /State Engagements: the Liu Lathu Programme – Malawi

The year 1994 marked a watershed moment in Malawi's political history as a new constitution was adopted which made provisions for a multiparty political system of government. The constitution also made provisions for good governance including the respect for human rights which among other things provides citizens with the right to demand effective and efficient service delivery, accountability and transparency from government.

To facilitate citizen engagement, the constitution highlights decentralisation as a state objective. A decentralisation policy and Act were adopted in 1998 and their implementation was meant to put in place mechanisms and structures for more citizen-state engagement. But to date not much progress has been made.

The Liu Mathu programme seeks to contribute towards bridging exiting gaps between constitutional provisions aimed at facilitating engagements between the state and citizens and the low levels of such engagements which obtains in practice. The programme seeks to influence change in the following areas; firstly, it seeks to effect change in policy, attitudes, practices, programmes and the allocation of resources. Secondly, it seeks to strengthen the capacity and power of civil society and the media to enable civil society to have more impact on the lives of citizens and on policy. Thirdly, it aims to have an effect on the democratic space so as to improve accountability of elected representatives and increase legitimacy of citizens and civil society in policy making. And finally it seeks to improve people's material gains in terms of the quality of life and expand their awareness as citizens with rights and entitlements and their responsibility to act on them.

3.1 Engagement tools and strategies

The programme engaged in campaigns to create awareness and sensitise communities, facilitated community interface meetings, encouraged media coverage, provided space for meetings aimed at lobbying communities and petitioned the government.

3.2 Successes

- A combination of media and interface meetings has led to communities in T/A Kaduya Phalombe getting five boreholes drilled using funds from the Constituency Development Fund.
- Through the same project, the District Council and other stakeholders agreed to prioritise water and sanitation when developing district annual budgets.

- Through interface meetings, government has commenced work on the construction of a district hospital in Phalombe. The grantee for this project facilitated the process of getting information on the status of the project.
- In Mchinji District, interface meetings have helped speed up the handling of domestic violence cases by the district justice system.
- In Zomba district, a combination of petitioning and interface meetings has led the district health office to open up a village clinic in one of the remote areas of the district.
- However, there are instances when interface meetings have not produced expected results. For example an interface meeting between a member of parliament and his constituents in Zomba resulted in an explosive debate.

3.3 Key Challenges

- Limited involvement of elected representatives. This is principally because; members of parliament pay more allegiance to their party leadership and less to the constituents who elected them.
- Demand driven media coverage
- Competition for resources among governance actors
- Difference between people's expectations and the project deliverables.

4. Case Study 4 – Citizens Voices and Accountability – Uganda

In Uganda, constitutionally and through the LG Act, "everyone has the right to participate in the affairs of government through representatives or civic organisations." The country has experienced different political transitions from dictatorships to military rule since 1986. A number of structures have been put in place to provide spaces for vulnerable and marginalised groups to participate in governance processes.

However, there are gaps in representation, participation, accountability and the space for civil society participation is shrinking.

The Mwananchi programme in Uganda therefore aims to address some of these challenges by promoting the voices of citizens by empowering them and promoting relationships through interlocutors.

The programme worked with 10 innovative governance pilot projects. These include;

- Follow your UPE money campaign
- Monitoring and engagement on general and maternal health service delivery

- Monitoring and increasing the number of people benefiting from CDDP and NAAS
- Establishment of alternative leadership systems "Bataka" justice courts and clan leader's charter.

4.1 Tools, approaches and strategies used

a) Public expenditure tracking and stakeholder consultation
The aim is to build evidence for stakeholders' engagement and to do so eight partners had the responsibility of monitoring public expenditures in specific thematic areas. By monitoring service delivery, partners hoped to create evidence which will be useful in providing adequate and quality services to the poor – a majority of who cannot afford private services.

Furthermore, there was the establishment of budget clubs (comprised of 20 members each) and the setting up of a suggestion box in each of the six targeted schools in which pupils voice their grievance and make their priorities known. Also Kapchorwa LG developed and passed a hygiene and sanitation by-law and the Bunyama Parish where has been considered for the 2011-2012 financial year to receive HC2.

b) Capacity building of community based resource persons
- Except CCFU, all other actors are empowering partners to monitor and engage with the duty bearers. CCFU is getting buy-in and creates awareness on the need for a traditional clan leader's charter
- KCSON and CODI strengthen and empower community based agricultural groups to effectively demand agricultural programmes and services
- Gender budgeting, rights-based approaches to development and civil law and understanding of legal institutions
- CODI further oriented the newly elected local council leaders on their roles and responsibility and activity often neglected by MOLG.

c) Stakeholders' accountability platforms
- There has been an attempt for partners to engage with the duty bearers right from the school, community, parish, sub-country and district level;
- KADINGO (Kalangala Round Table Discussion)
- KCSON (Quarterly sub-country accountability)
- LNGF and MADEN hold timely engagement forums
- CODI (village parliament)
- Cases of action against less accountable leaders are increasingly common in the area of operation
- Companies reported to have implemented shoddy work have been blacklisted and removed from pre-qualification contractors' lists (Masindi)
- A ghost health unit which purportedly received grants was removed from the health unit list (Masindi)

- A sub-accountant of the Matete newly formed sub-country was interjected by the CAO for distributing CDD funds without following proper procedures (Kibaale)
- HC worker disclosed of stealing drugs publicly apologised (Kapchorwa)
- A CDO returned 2,500,000 meant for CDD (Luwero)

d) "Bataka" Courts
- "Bataka" is a Kiganda word for ordinary citizens/residents
- WVU promotes community based alternative justice systems
- A panel of seven elders selected by the community members are facilitated to arbitrate civil cases. The Bataka courts also act as justice inception centres
- 4 Bataka courts have been established in the two sub-counties of operation
- Justice services are made accessible and affordable to ordinary citizens

4.2   Challenges

- Political interference and resistance from the local leadership (all partners) as citizen's empowerment is seen as opposition
- CODI was threatened with arrest and LNGF was held in custody for a few hours for allegedly providing "wrong information"
- CCFU found it difficult to work with Buganda clan leaders
- Except WVU, other partners have found it difficult to work with MPs
- The panel of elders and LCI courts were in conflict
- Working with the media has been quite difficult.
- Working at the national level and policy engagement is an area that has not been fully exploited. The Mwananchi programme focuses on behavioural systems, policy and practice changes. Although this engagement has yielded some benefits at local level, it has not been explored fully at national level where major policy decisions happen. This is because financial and human resources are limited.

4.3   National level issues of significance

- Call for recognition of traditional systems of leadership that seem to work Challenge "last mile" drug delivery system by NMS where delivery is not informed by demand but by level of health unit's "one size' fits all wrong approach
- Engage government to invest in specific social protection interventions such as construction of additional health centres and transport infrastructure for remote rural communities like Kalangala for them to access health services
- Engage government to further decentralise maternity services in rural remote areas.

Andrew Ssebunya presenting the Uganda case study

5. Case study 5 – use of evidence-based approaches to influence policies and engage citizens: experience of Lem Limat – Ethiopia

5.1 Technology-based evidence for engagement of the community with local government actors – using the Guraghe Mihuran/Intellectuals Forum (GMF)

One of the grantee interlocutors is a membership based civil society organisation and one area of focus was volunteer individuals from Guraghe Zone educated at tertiary level. The second area of focus was on the generation of reliable evidences for community engagement with local actors of the state and socio-economic, infrastructural and environmental issues.

The GMF developed spatial and thematic information through geographic information system technique and the use of databases, satellite images and modern cartographic technologies. It also produced maps of the social service facilities, infrastructure networks and natural features.

5.2 The final outputs

The status and distribution of resources; Social service facilities, adult education centers, formal schools, HEIs, health institutions, veterinaries, infrastructure networks.

5.3 The effect of outputs

They triggered concern on the status of natural resources, degradation, misuse and underutilization of natural resources and the need for communities to engage with local government miss- and underutilization of land and land resources. They also increased awareness of the fact that land is owned by the people and government and that effective utilization of land as a resource is the responsibility of government.

5.4 Challenges

Limited education and interest to join the GMF, political squabbles between the people and the ruling party, the current land tenure policy in the country and the poor development of volunteerism in the country were all named as challenges.

Section C : Continental Perspectives

Here, the focus was on a critical overview of the democratic space in Africa with a view to identifying key areas where advances can be made to enable greater representation of people's voices in the decisions that affect their lives.

1. Civil society space and an enabling environment in Africa

Participants listening to Dr. Bheki Moyo making a presentation on the "(Dis) enabling environment for civil society in Africa

Despite the huge strides made in forging democracy and good governance in many African countries and the frequency in which elections are held, there are lingering concerns over the fact that the public space continues to shrink and is under threat. This is evidenced in the fact that there has been an increase in the promulgation of laws in African countries that severely restrict activities of certain groups, especially minorities.

South Africa, a country praised for the giant strides it has made towards democratic freedoms and for its very progressive constitution continues to push for the enactment of the Protection of Information Bill which will severely curtail attempts by citizens and groups to access certain information thereby making it difficult to hold government to account.

Even in countries which have been able to enact enabling legislation and have taken cognisance of the role played by other sectors, there is a tendency for authorities to use draconian methods to silence citizens who attempt to exercise their right of assembly, association and expression.

It is worth noting however that aside from the state, other factors like the market, and donors have contributed towards the restrictions on the public sphere. The financial and economic crises of 2008 for example had serious implications on donor funding for civil society and prompted some donors to shift priorities on activities they fund. The market including corporations has also encroached into areas traditionally seen as the preserve of civil society groups.

Government authorities on the continent and beyond continue to view civil society with suspicion in spite of the fact that most leaders came to power with the help of civil society groups or were themselves part of civil society. Because civil society is seen as an enemy and hence a threat to the state, most governments have either co-opted civil society formations or treat them as enemies and not as viable partners that can play a constructive role in the development of the state.

In recent time, civil society has been heavily criticised on the grounds that it is not accountable to its own constituents.

2. Democratic trends and citizen participation in Africa: participation through elections

2.1 Participation through electoral processes

Since 1956, an estimated 2.4 billion Africans have registered to vote in their respective countries and out of this figure, an estimated 1.4 billion have voted in about 407 elections that have been organised. Overall, voter turn out is estimated at an average of 65.93% in all elections and this can be broken down as follows; the presidential average 66.84%, parliamentary average 74%, invalid votes 3.86% (parliamentary 4.9% and presidential 3.7%).

a) Overall trends
Generally, studies show a worldwide decline from 76.4% from 1945 to 1960. By 2006 total decline in voter turnout was about 69.7% but trends suggest there are variations in this figure depending on the context in which elections are held. Contextual issues, individual and social issues make it difficult to have a conclusive argument on elections.

b) Contextual reasons for variations

The context at national level can vary sometimes greatly from one election to the next. Contextual factors combine to make participation in an election more or less attractive. Examples of such factors include the following: firstly, perceptions of the effectiveness of political competition that is the degree to which citizens believe that different election outcomes lead to significant differences in the direction and impact of government.

Secondly, competitiveness and salience of the electoral event at both national and local levels affect electoral outcomes in that if the electoral contest is believed to be close, voters may view the event as having greater importance while expected margins of victory may partially deter.

Thirdly, the nature of the party systems including the degree of fragmentation may provide a more varied option for voters. Although strong fragmentation may have the reverse effect with voters confused or unclear about the effect their vote may have. Added to this is the nature of campaign spending which may raise the profile of an election and lead to a wider distribution of political information.

Fourthly, voter traditions in different communities, strategic voting (where voters may be willing to turnout in their numbers to prevent an undesired outcome), the length of time between elections, the nature of the electoral event and the weather are additional factors that can affect levels of participation in elections.

c) Systemic reasons for variations
Systemic or institutional elements are generally more stable and often require considerable legislative and administrative efforts to change. Many of these factors can be viewed best in terms of facilitation or as things that make participation more or less troublesome. Some examples of systemic considerations are:

Firstly, the choice of the electoral system means the more responsive the electoral system in representing the choices made by the electorate, the higher voter turn out will be. Secondly, studies have revealed that countries with institutionalised compulsory voting experience high turnout as long as the compulsion is backed by effective sanctions for non-voting and that alternative voting procedures like advance, postal or proxy voting affect levels of participation. Thirdly, the scheduling of elections on an official working day or on a public holiday as well as the physical access to the polls and now the use of new technologies all have an impact on the turnout in elections.

d) Individual and social reasons
It has been argued that younger members are less likely to vote, while residential mobility and religious involvement, attitude and political interest, quality of voter education, and social networks equally play a role in levels of participation during elections.

2.2 Lessons and observations in democracy building through strengthening participation

Firstly, democracy seems to have come to a stall in many other countries across the globe and remains frozen at the level of "electoral democracy" or backsliding through the appropriation of ever larger shares of power by the executive branch of government. Furthermore "hybrid" forms of governance have emerged in many countries in Africa. Secondly, the citizen is central to democracy and time and time again democracy proves central to the citizen. Thirdly, there is need to focus on citizens as drivers and strengthen the ability of citizens to be more effective participants in shaping democracy. This means national and local assessments as well as dialogue with formal actors in the political process. Substantive democratic change is hard won- disenchantment with movement here plays itself in electoral processes. Fourthly, gross representation of women in politics remains a major flaw of democracies around the world with very few exceptions. Even in countries where participation is more balanced in numerical terms, the unequal role and influence of women and men on political decision making remains an issue. And finally, building and sharing comparative knowledge remains important particularly in the south.

Section D: Continental perspectives on participatory governance II

Here, an analysis was done on the working on two critical continental institutions and ways in which civil society can meaningfully engage with these continental institutions to represent local, national and regional governance concerns.

Participants at the Workshop listening to a presentation on the African Peer Review Mechanism

1. Participatory processes in Africa – the case of the African Peer Review Mechanism
Background

Africa entered the new millennium with optimism and a commonly derived and supported roadmap on how to overcome the development challenges that have plagued the continent for many years. At the centre of Africa's strategic framework for rebirth and renewal was the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) which was aimed at eradicating poverty and place African countries individually and collectively on a path for sustainable growth and development.

NEPAD was established along five core principles (good governance, peace, stability and security, sound economic policy making, effective partnerships, domestic ownership and leadership). The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) emerged as the centre piece

of the good governance initiative and has been widely heralded as the crown jewel of the policy framework for Africa's renaissance.

1.1. The APRM

The APRM is a voluntary, self monitoring tool acceded tool by members of the African Union and a key guiding principle of the APRM is African ownership. There is an implicit recognition and understanding at all layers that the APRM provides an African voice to African problems. Implemented effectively therefore, the APRM has the potential to unleash good governance on the continent while at the same time lead Africa's economic rejuvenation and renaissance.

Distinctively, the APRM recognises that all countries are not at the same level of development given their different historical and political contexts. It thus encourages participating countries to support each other through an exercise of constructive peer-dialogue and persuasion where necessary to ensure that all states achieve full compliance by a mutually agreed date. The APRM Secretariat covers the following areas; democracy and political governance, economic governance and management, corporate governance and socio-economic development.

1.2. Status of implementation of the APRM

About 30 members of the African Union participate in the APRM and these include; Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Zambia.

Of these, 16 have reviewed review missions and 14 peer reviewed at the level of the forum. The reports of Sierra Leone and Zambia are yet to be discussed at the forum while Kenya became the first country to receive the second cycle review in February 2011. The APRM has the following principles; national ownership and leadership, transparency, accountability, technical competence, credibility, freedom from manipulation. The APRM process is designed to be open and participatory.

1.3. How civil society participates in the process

Civil society can be represented at the national commission, provide input into the questionnaire and the self assessment process, provide input at workshops and focus group discussions, validate reports and national programmes of action, interact with the visiting country review team, media and other forms of public dialogue and implement the NPOA.

Understanding the diversity in the context of the countries, the country guidelines do not mandate which stakeholders should participate in the APRM, but leave it to countries to organise their national processes and identify key stakeholders to bring on board. Focus on institutions whose mandates cover the four identified areas of governance and development; for example human rights, NGOs, religious organisations involved in socio-economic development, the private sector and chambers of commence, research organisations and economic consortiums. There is also a tendency to involve umbrella organisations as well as issue-specific groupings like women, youth, formers and rural communities.

1.4 The importance of civil society participation

Firstly participation of civil society can supplement conventional data sources and capture the perceptions of good governance and development. Second, civil society can help map the status and priorities at a more disaggregated level geographically and demographically. Thirdly, it can reveal information about the needs of people and their reactions to policy proposals and thus provide information about the effectiveness of different strategies. And finally it can strengthen capacity and enhance the credibility and impact of findings

1.5 Challenges

The following challenges have been identified in the APRM process;
- The dichotomy between leadership by government and management by NGC not easy to achieve in practice especially as government is the source of funds
- The NPOA faces a challenge in striking a balance between a general wish list of all stakeholders and a negotiated and doable plan for government focusing on national priorities
- It is quite difficult to measure the volume and quality of participation
- A true participatory process is costly in financial and technical terms, there is limited capacity of the populace to engage on a wide variety of governance issues and on a regular basis there is consultation fatigue and disenchantment.

1.6 Value added of the APRM to Participatory Governance

- African countries have opened themselves to scrutiny on several issues which were previously no go areas both continentally and nationally. Governance disclosure is more readily accepted if not normalised
- The APRM has increased democratic space nationally and collaborative relationships between sectors of society
- Issues covered by the APRM speak to participation and transparency (eg media freedoms, political party formation, Bill of rights issues)

- The APRM is a good diagnostic tool to assess the progress countries are making in all areas of governance
- The nexus between governance and development in a manner of speaking complement discussions on the right to development
- APRM is looking to promote people centred development and inclusive policy making.

2. Perspectives on the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR)

ACHPR is a quasi-judicial body tasked with promoting and ensuring the protection of human rights and collective (people's) rights throughout the African Continent. The main function of the African Commission is to protect human rights. The commission is also tasked with ensuring that the African Charter on Human and People's Rights is adhered to and considers individual complaints of violations of the Charter.

The Commission came into existence with the coming into force, on 21 October 1986, of the African Charter (adopted by the OAU on 27 June 1981). Although its authority rests on its own treaty-the African Charter, the Commission reports to the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (formerly the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). For the first two years of its existence, the Commission was based at the OAU Secretariat in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, but in November 1989 it relocated to Banjul, Gambia.

It is worth noting that the ACHPR should be distinguished from the African Union Commission, as the OAU Secretariat has been renamed since the creation of the African Union. The Commission meets twice a year: usually in March or April and in October or November.

2.1 Composition

The ACHPR is made up of eleven members, elected by secret ballot at the Africa Union assembly of Heads of State and Government. These members, who serve six-year renewable terms, are "chosen from amongst African personalities of the highest reputation, known for their high morality, integrity, impartiality and competence in matters of human and peoples' rights" (Charter, Article 31) and, in selecting these personalities, particular consideration is given "to persons having legal experience".

Currently, the Commission is composed of the following candidates; Reine Alapini-Gansou, Chairperson (Benin), Mumba Malila, Vice Chairperson (Zambia), Musa Ngary Bitaye (The Gambia), Faith Pansy Tlakula (South Africa), Zainabo Sylvie Kayitesi (Rwanda), Catherine Dupe Atoki (Nigeria), Soyata Maiga (Mali), Yeung Kam John Sik Yuen

(Mauritius), Lucy Asuagbor (Cameroon), Mohammad Khalfallah (Tunisia) and Mohamed Fayek (Egypt).

The Commission has three broad areas of responsibility, promoting human and peoples' rights, protecting human and peoples' rights and interpreting the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

The Commission has six Special Mechanisms, or Special Rapporteurs, that address specific human rights issues: extra-judicial, summary or arbitrary executions**,** freedom of expression, human rights defenders, prisons and conditions of detention, refugees and internally displaced persons and rights of women. The rapporteurs are highly regarded experts in their field who monitor, investigate and report on allegations of violations in member states of the African Union.

2.2 Working Groups

There are five Working Groups that monitor and investigate various issues under the purview of the Commission. These include: Working Group on Specific Issues Related to the work of the African Commission, Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities in Africa, Working Group on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Working Group on the Robben Island Guidelines and Working Group on the Death Penalty

The commission considers complaints and communications from state parties; however, for any state to be involved in such a manner, they should have ratified the Charter on human and people's rights. The charter also has civil and political rights and economic, social and political rights and people's rights.

2.3 How Civil Society can be involved in the Commission

There is an NGO Forum that meets just before the session starts. The main way for NGOs to participate is through observer status.

2.4 Challenges faced by NGOs

Lack of resources for NGOs to attend the NGO Forum and lobby the issues they may have. Some NGOs are still unaware of the existence and functions of the commission, the commissioners and where they are from. Although they do not represent their countries, it might be helpful to know this information for lobbying and engagement purposes.

No political will by governments to comply with recommendations because of the lack of power to enforce resolutions. There is no pressure from governments to produce

reports faster because that also depends on the will of governments. This is common especially when there is/are serious human rights problems at stake and that also results in problems for the efficiency of the Commission.

Also the fact that the commission makes decisions that are not binding reduces the level of interest and the value given to the Commission form civil society. The ICC seems to be the most effective mechanism because it makes decisions that are binding and that lead to actions.

2.5 Successes

A helpful success story of the commission is the lobbying undertaken by NGOs from Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe NGOs engaged with the African Commission on the various human rights abuses in Zimbabwe in the early 2000s. These efforts translated into some achievements with the sending of an African Union envoy to the country. The commission has also been seen as successful in some of its work on indigenous peoples.

Participants listening to a presentation on the African Commission on Human and People's Rights

Section E: Global Perspectives on Participatory Governance

1. Bridging the gaps in Participatory Governance using new technologies

1.1 The context: Why new media?

Social networking tools have the potential to enhance citizen engagement, promote social inclusion and create opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship and development. Social networking has the potential to spread news quickly and also connect people.

Social media was used to maximum effect during the Arab Spring. As smart phones become cheaper the number of people who use social media increases. Even in countries with low numbers of users for example in the Seychelles, the percentage of usage is quite high.

Technology allows us to connect with 'audience' to dialogue and share best practices and social media helps us to collaborate with other CSOs but there are still issues of exclusion. Social media is only a tool.

The use of social media comes with its own unique challenges for example, it can be used to identify and persecute people. Social media also comes with the threat of increasing the digital divide and governments in some countries erode access to information by shutting down some of these tools.

1.2 An overview

- New platforms allow organisations to connect their users directly and the world is now much smaller but also more complex, so people want to be steered in the right direction.
- **Living values:** power is concentrated in one figure, usually the director.
- **Impact:** There is high social impact but limited policy impact and this leads to a gap between energy given to policy activity and the impact it is achieving.
- **Participation:** There is low participation in civil society and there is an emerging perception that CSOs are distant, urban, middle class and elitist. Furthermore there is the social vs. political participation dilemma wherein people are more interested in social participation i.e. sports, entertainment than in policy. In addition, online activism has taken off with the advent of the Arab spring.

1.3 What does this mean?

- That supporters of the sector need to look beyond CSOs and where people are already participating, there is need to nurture these spaces. Supporters need to support processes that connect disconnected parts of civil society better.
- Even though new media has opened new spaces for communication and collaboration, the key question is how much are we utilising them and how updated are our websites.
- Another central issue that CS used to collect the views and information but now citizens and other actors get this information themselves with the use of new technologies and so there might be the need for civil society to instead enable society to get this information using new social media.
- There is therefore a need for civil society to re-define its role or risk becoming irrelevant.

2. Bridging the gaps; a summary of the findings of the CIVICUS Civil Society Index

The most recent phase of the CSI project was implemented by country partners in Latin America, East and Southern Europe, the former Soviet Union, East and Central Asia, Middle East, North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa. Following the implementation, the following outputs were derived; 30 analytical country reports, policy action briefs, case studies, national workshops, participatory processes, launches, media coverage, follow-up, international dataset and overview and comparative publications.

2.1. An analysis of the outputs highlights the following key findings

In general, civil society space is volatile and contested, human resources are stretched, networks are strength, social impact is strong, policy impact less so, CSOs do not adequately model their values and are seen as distant and that participation in organisations is low.

- **On the space** - there is an increase in illegal restrictions, attacks in political and rhetoric laws, selective and superficial dialogue, lack of space driving apathy, new space externally driven e.g. the EU and opportunities for space frustrated by capacity and structural issues.
- **On resources –** falling funding, very small resources, donor dependence and vulnerability to switches, heavy reliance on volunteering and rapid staff turn over
- **CSO connections –** present and widespread CSOs, organic vs. donor-driven networks, competition between networks and members, a segmented, disconnected civil society, urban vs. rural and limited international networking

- **Impact**- High social impact, limited policy impact, gap between policy activity and policy impact, low public trust is a limitation but trust in civil society is normally higher than in other institutions
- **A participation deficit –** participation in CSOs is low, CSOs are distant from people and seen as part of the elite, social vs. political participation, informal participation and volunteerism is high and online activism is bypassing the organisation.
- **Risks after revolutions - the** import of CSOs, low levels of participation and trust, donor dependency and defunct CSOs and the return of repression.

2.2 What this means

Supporters of the sector need to look beyond CSOs; CSOs need to connect with informal, traditional activism and new online activism; CSOs need to offer new participation routes; and civil society supporters need more mapping and more analysis.

The Way forward

- Participation of citizens is not limited to casting votes in local government, parliamentary and presidential elections but involves participation in decision making processes that affect the lives of citizens between elections though a wide variety of means and mechanisms including community forums, interface meetings with government and participatory planning, budgeting and evaluation mechanisms.
- The findings from the six cases studies and discussions throughout the workshop indicate that dialogue, awareness and advocacy are central aspects which facilitate and enhance the participation of citizens in decision making processes.
- The practice of participatory governance therefore occurs at all levels of the governance cycle and can be initiated by citizens, governments or civil society.
- For citizens to have a role in the decision making processes that affect their lives, there is need for more dialogue both among citizens (e.g. through community forums) and between citizens and government representatives (e.g., through facilitated interface meetings).
- While elections provide an opportunity for citizens to exercise their rights to choose their leaders and representatives, they remain a limited form of participation and a very blunt instrument of accountability. Participation of citizens should occur at all times before, during and after elections.
- To encourage citizen participation and the sharing of ideas, participants from the workshop will be encouraged to join an online community of practice and PG exchange hosted by CIVICUS but run by participants so as to share experiences and learning on PG and form coalitions and alliances.
- The outcomes and key trends emerging form these online discussions will be used for further discussions at the PG webinar.
- The volunteers from Ethiopia can be included in the CIVICUS PG exchange and the community of practice to learn from and share experiences with other PG practitioners
- In the Zambian case, it has been noted that grantees communicate and dialogue with each other but would benefit more if they can be linked with networks in other countries to share best practices and ways of working through the PG Exchange and webinars.
- The NCO in Ghana has over the years participated in many communities of practice and might have more lessons to share while the NCO from Malawi is keen to build on its networking experience by engaging more with other organisations on policy issues.

Annex 1: List of Participants

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