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Effective Collaboration Between Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Government

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Dede Bedu-Addo,
Coordinator,
Ghana Monitoring & Evaluation Forum
Introduction

CSOs play a significant role in country evaluation ecosystems:

- They are a source of evidence generation.
- They employ Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) professionals, commissioning evaluations, etc.
- In many cases, they have advanced M&E systems, generating significant amounts of data and evaluation evidence for decision-making.
- They undertake advocacy for the use of evidence, mobilizing public and political support for particular issues.
- They promote equity-focused and gender-responsive country-led monitoring and evaluation.
- However, the participation of CSOs in government evaluation systems, both at national or sectoral level, tends to be limited.
The Ghana Case – CSO/Govt. Collaboration in Sanitation

- Environment where consultation and participation of CSOs in policy processes is valued and enabled
- Effective waste management and access to improved sanitation services is a major challenge in urban and rural Ghana
- Historically low levels of attention to sanitation by the state (limited budget allocation, limited capacity)
- Space created was taken up by diverse CSOs, who are major evidence generators but operate at project level
- Civil Society have been key change agents in getting government to use evidence for service delivery improvements
- International pressure, with evidence-based advocacy campaigns driven by large INGOs, such as WaterAid, UNICEF, SNV, Coalitions like CONIWAS and local CSOs led to increased Presidential commitment to sanitation reforms
## Facilitators and Barriers to Evidence Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACILITATORS</th>
<th>BARRIERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSO consultation and active participation in policy processes</td>
<td>Inter-agency coordination problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Popular pressure for change (both international and internal)</td>
<td>Outsourcing of service delivery responsibility to private sector with</td>
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<td></td>
<td>limited support and oversight</td>
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<td>Prevailing policy narratives (including President’s statement)</td>
<td>Limited resources and administrative red tape on generation of data</td>
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<td>Established mechanisms to enable flow of information and involvement of</td>
<td>Knowledge that evidence is not always used for decision making is a</td>
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<td>CSOs in decision making processes (eg. strong networks eg. CONIWAS, Water</td>
<td>disincentive</td>
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<td>Conference)</td>
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<td>Building Capacities (of CSOs and Development Partners) to use evidence</td>
<td>Lack of sustained advocacy</td>
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<td>Incentives (allocation of budgetary resources based on provision of data &amp;</td>
<td>Timeliness of data generation</td>
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<tr>
<td>reports)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Receptiveness of District Assembly personnel to use evidence in developing</td>
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<tr>
<td>their plans</td>
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<td>Evidence champions and mentors</td>
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Lessons for Ghana and Beyond...

- Strengthen and harmonise the data ecosystem and governance infrastructure to support production, access and use of timely, trusted/reliable, relevant data for policy uptake
- Non-state data producers (CSOs/academia) need to improve their understanding of how, when and which government institutions and other actors use evidence for policy design, implementation and monitoring so they are better able to use these opportunities
- Need for increased recognition and use of CSO-generated evidence in policy interventions
- Evidence is used when government and key stakeholders are involved in the evidence use change process from the design stage.
- Developing and building on an inclusive culture is paramount in promoting evidence use at all levels of society.
- Community and individual ownership of the evidence process is key in creating the environment for policy mechanisms to work for the desired policy outcomes.
- Uptake of evidence is better when championed by a senior Statesman, eg. the President
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Understanding facilitators and barriers to Government-CSO collaboration: case of VAW/VAC in South Africa

15 May 2020
Matodzi Amisi
Associate at CLEAR-AA & Board Member of SAMEA
Key questions

- What role do CSOs have in policy, service delivery and M&E?
- What can enable CSOs to play this role more effectively?
- What can detract?
Underlying worldview: when dealing with complex problems multiple perspectives are needed for policies and services to be responsive.

Covid-19 makes this even more apparent
<table>
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<th>CSO roles in Policy/implementation/M&amp;E</th>
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<tr>
<td>Representation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical inputs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity building</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service delivery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social function</td>
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Pabari et al (upcoming)
Facilitators

- Institutionalisation of collaborative/participatory policy and implementation
  - Constitution
  - Legislation
  - Administrative requirements in policy making

- Political openness to constructive criticism and CSO participation in policy, implementation and M&E

- Resources to enable CSO participation

- Well established and organised CSO sector

- Mobilisation and collaboration amongst CSOs

- Well defined social issue

- Creating spaces for dialogue i.e. National Council for GBV;

- Positive relationships enabling information flows and collaboration
Barriers

- Social fragmentation and unequal access to spaces of influence within CSOs
- Unrecognised and untreated historical trauma
- Lack of resources for participation
- Antagonistic relations
- Competing and mutually exclusive priorities
- Political and legislatively closed administration ie. NES not open to CSO inputs
- Conflict between government multiple roles i.r.t CSOs (Regulator, funder, register, collaborator/partner)
- Sectoral fragmentation and competition
Lessons

- CSOs are not homogenous; conflict and competition exist, need to be acknowledged and addressed i.e. the process of Developing the NSP on GBV
- Government needs to recognise it doesn’t (and can’t) have all the skills, understanding or capacity to solve development problems by itself
- Spaces for ongoing dialogue critical to overcoming some of the relational and language barriers i.e. the Violence Prevention Forum in South Africa
- Institutionalisation of participatory policy making and service delivery creates enabling conditions
- Within this spirit, national evaluation systems can do more to encourage participation of CSOs i.e. South Africa started involving CSOs in Steering committees of evaluations
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The relationship between CSO’s and government

Director
wilmi@sevenpasses.org.za
About The Seven Passes Initiative

The Seven Passes Initiative started 11 years ago because of a need that was identified in the community. Gang violence was a serious problem in the Touwsranten area. Community members and commercial farmers were very concerned about the influence of the violence on the community and also on their future. The Seven Passes was established to help young people do better at school. We started as an aftercare facility only, with 29 learners attending. We have grown exponentially and currently have 733 children registered to receive our services.

We work in the most beautiful rural area of George, Western Cape. We are situated in Touwsranten and two years ago we expanded our services to the nearby Wilderness Heights area. Wilderness Heights is an informal settlement close to the very popular holiday destination Wilderness.
733 children registered
Seven Passes Initiative - history

Not only did the afterschool program grow, two new programmes also developed as a result of the needs we saw in the after school program. The three programmes we now offer are:

• Afterschool, life skills and education
• Youth development and ECD and;
• Positive parenting programmes

All of these programmes are interrelated and support each other.
How does Seven Passes Initiative contribute towards violence prevention in Touwsranten?

- **Seven Passes Initiative**
  - Parenting
  - Education
  - Youth Development

- **Sinovuyo**
  - Kids
  - Teens

- **Thula Sana**

- **Booksharing**

- **Internship**

- **Lifeskills**

- **Academic programme**

- **Sport**

- **Art**

- **Training of young people from the community**
When we established a relationship with government some years later we realized that our principles align with the provincial policies of government. In 2014 we started collaborating with Department of Social Development (DSD). This alignment is important. Just like I realized my values and my husband’s values must align for our relationship to be successful, so we will have more success when we collaborate with partners who share our values in our work. We currently have relationships with DSD, DCAS – Afterschool unit, DOCS and DOH on a regional level. Unfortunately, these policies are not always communicated well. Then we need brokers (the marriage counsellors or mediators of our world) are needed to think things through and make it understandable. In this regard, we have worked with the Violence Prevention Forum, National Association of Social Change Entities in Education and the Institute for Security Studies.
Relationships with government

• For us it is important to have relationship with government because it gives our organization credibility and it enhances our reputation. The relationship legitimizes our services.

• Another important benefit of our partnership with DOCS is the employment opportunities that are created for the young people of our community. Our Youth development programme runs through a funded partnership with the Extended Public Works Programme of the Western Cape Department of Community Safety. Young people from the community work for Seven Passes for a year and receive a stipend from the department. The organisation benefits from the valuable involvement of young members of the community while we are contributing to their ability to study further and/or find long term employment.
Challenges

• One of the biggest challenges in our relationship with DSD, for example, is that we are not equal partners. NPO’s take responsibility for 98% of the work of DSD, while DSD makes most of the decisions and fund according to that. The funding that NPO’s receive are also not sufficient for long term sustainability. The funding for afterschool programmes for instance only covers a small percentage of the actual costs and in a difficult funding environment, it’s not certain that we will always be able to find the shortfall. So, services are not assured. If this was a marriage, I would be very concerned.

• Another growth area in the relationship is the M&E system of government that focusses on numbers and not on the quality of the programmes. For reporting we show how many days a child attended our services but no outcomes. I believe this is an important area that requires further discussion.
COVID-19 Response

For NGO’s who work closely to the clients and are “on the ground” it was necessary to make rapid changes during the COVID-19 crisis. When schools closed and it was announced that we would not be able to continue with our normal services, we immediately decided to focus on the provision of food. Instead of providing food for all the children who normally attend our afterschool centre, we distributed food to children in three areas of our community. With lockdown we decided to provide food parcels so that families would not have to queue in big groups and because that seemed to be the best way of ensuring that children still get the nutrition they need. We partnered with the local clinic and arranged for parents to collect their food parcels there. Unfortunately, after the second week the clinic struggled to distribute the parcels and treat patients. We started to distribute food parcels ourselves, from our offices. But very quickly we saw that the system was causing frustration and anger because we could not provide every family with a food parcel - and however ‘fair’ or reasonable our criteria might have been for who qualified for a parcel, most families believed they should get a food parcel. We have since changed our approach, and work with local partners, including the Church and municipality to ensure that nutritious meals are available daily at soup kitchens in the community.
COVID-19 Response

Centralization of food is currently a crisis for many organisations. I attended a Zoom meeting on Wednesday – CSO are very angry about government’s stance on this issue.

We made some other changes too.

In collaboration with the primary school, the education facilitators copy and distribute homework in the community during the week. Most of our parents do not have enough money to buy data to download homework, so hard copies of school work is necessary. High school learners are in contact with the high school facilitator through social media, who helps them with research and homework.

Since level 4 was announced, we have been delivering our parenting programmes on an individual basis to interested parents. We also have emergency numbers that parents can use to discuss challenges with parenting or report abuse.

All staff members are making masks at home that we distribute in the community. We have distributed approximately 2000 masks since the beginning of lockdown.

We report on our soup kitchen’s numbers to DSD every week and we keep DOCS, and DSD informed on our other activities and changes that happen.
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