

Social Accountability Stock Taking in Caucasus

Horizonti Foundation

General Information

- Countries covered:
Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia
- Target groups of the SA stock taking initiative:
Civil society organizations, research institutions, individuals.
- Information collected regarding 24 initiatives implemented in the area of participatory budgeting, independent budget analysis, expenditure tracking or performance monitoring.

Driving force of SA initiatives

- Addressing social or economic needs of target groups, beneficiaries or constituencies;
- Securing a greater transparency in budget or public finance related processes;
- A greater civic engagement in all phases of utilization of public funds.

Main objectives of SA initiatives:

- Enhance accountability and transparency of public sector;
- Encourage civic participation in budgeting processes at national or local levels;
- Rise public awareness with regard to approved budgets or expenditures of public funds;
- Build skills or capacities or target groups or beneficiaries;
- Advocate for improved policy framework for the budgeting processes.

Target groups of SA initiatives:

- Wider public or specific segments of population;
- Public agencies at national or local levels;
- Media;
- Civil society sector;
- International financial institutions;
- Businesses.

Environment & political culture

- Absence of legal impediments for SA initiatives;
- Political instability;
- Weak democratic institutions;
- Low civic activation or interest in SA initiatives;
- Inadequate information communication schemes;
- Weak self-governance in Georgia and Azerbaijan.

SA tools and methodologies

- **Public expenditure tracking & performance Monitoring**
 - Accessing public information maintained within the public agencies and subsequent information analysis;
 - Research and study of public program effects;
 - Field visits to examine implementation of public programs;
 - Activation of public program beneficiaries to obtain their participation in monitoring interventions;

- Communicate findings of monitoring or expenditure tracking interventions to wider public, government, international community through media, information bulletins, web pages;
- Produce and advocate recommendations to address identified shortcomings;
- Networking and coalition building – common feature for expenditure tracking SA initiatives.

➤ Participatory budgeting

- Formal procedures allowing commenting budget drafts or feeding in national budget development efforts in place;
- Participatory budgeting exercised with a greater efficiency on local rather than national level;
- Inadequate involvement of civil society in decision- or policymaking or implementation of reforms;
- Participatory budgeting efforts mostly initiated by CSOs, although capacities of LG built to attain a greater civic involvement in decision making at municipal or self-governance level.

- Methodologies and tools include:
 - Capacity building (targeted on public officers as well as wider public or its specific segments);
 - Community or stakeholder mobilization;
 - Identification of beneficiary or target group needs and constraints;
 - Developing and advocating recommendations that should be subsequently reflected in approved budgets;
 - Organizing advocacy campaigns that include face-to-face meetings or debating with public authorities, obtaining media involvement in the SA initiative.

➤ Independent budget analysis

- Study of national budgets and measuring impact of budget allocations in certain areas through processing statistical information;
- Regular public financial policy analysis;
- Macro-economic modeling;
- Analysis of budget-related legislation or regulations;
- Developing and advocating policy recommendations.

Impediments

Public sector:

- Inadequate accountability and transparency;
- Low qualification of public officers;
- Difficulties in accessing public information;
- Reluctance of public authorities to allow a greater civic participation in decision-making;
- Low level of institutional development and weak financial basis of local governments;
- Instability of public authorities and frequent shifting of personnel employed therein.

Impediments

- Civil society sector:
- Apathy or reluctance of communities or individuals to engage into transparency or accountability initiatives;
- Low public awareness in regard to laws or regulations stipulating civic participation in budgeting processes;
- Formal nature of civic participation procedures as provided by law;
- Inadequate skills of CSOs to establish effective partnerships with public authorities.

Next steps:

- Institutionalize best practices and most successful models;
- Consider options to advance civic engagement at national level;
- Build advocacy skills and capacities of civil society players, diversify advocacy tools;
- International financial institutions should influence national governments to obtain civil society input in development of programs for which loans or grants are given;
- Local CSOs should further build their constituencies and establish effective ties with local communities or beneficiaries of their initiatives.

Thank You !