

October 2018

POLICY BRIEF

MAKING INFORMATION DISCLOSURE IN EXTRACTIVE GOVERNANCE COUNT FOR ACCOUNTABILITY IN MOZAMBIQUE

Does information disclosure on corrupt extractive contracts empower citizens and institutions to take social and political action (SPA) to demand government accountability?

In Mozambique, there have been some instances where Civil Society Organisation (CSO) work on information disclosure has contributed to actions resulting in the compensation and resettlement of affected mining communities, information about extractive contracts and concessions being made publicly available on line, and actions resulting in development and changes in mining legislation such as Lei 20, 2014; Lei 21, 2014. But such action is at best episodic, and generally, there has been little social and political action (SPA) around information disclosure, which demands government accountability. What could be the reasons and how can policy actors make information disclosure count in the promotion of accountability in Mozambique?

Research finds the causes of social and political inaction for accountability

A recent study on information disclosure in the extractive sector has found 18 factors that result in citizen and institutional (state and non-state) inaction in demanding government accountability. Conducted by the Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR) in collaboration with the Centre for Public Integrity (CIP), as part of the Action for Empowerment and Accountability (A4EA) research programme, the study shows that citizens and/or institutions are unlikely to demand government accountability when:

- citizens' are experiencing high levels of economic vulnerability but much of the access to economic opportunities are anchored around state patronage and network;
- a single political party has dominated governments for a long period of time and the mode of selection of Parliamentarians is defined by a 'party list', and not directly elected by the people;
- CSOs have weak citizens' mobilisation strategies and information disclosure is presented in a written form in a context where adult illiteracy rate is 45%;
- there is an institutional culture of 'submissiveness' created out of fear of the

political regime.

The governance and development outcomes of this accountability failure are enormous.

“In terms of activism, there aren’t many CSOs in the country. This tells you something about the nature of CSOs in the country. They may be active on Facebook but they will not take to the streets. This inaction is related to economic reasons because if they demonstrate on the street they will have no jobs. But generally, our history and culture are not related to activism” (A Member of Parliament during a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in Maputo, 15 March 2018).

In instances where localised community actions have taken place, their impacts have been minimal at the national level. This is because the government, through a combination of co-optation and fear, largely controls Maputo, Mozambique’s capital where the effects of SPA bubbling up in other parts of the country (especially where extractives are concerned) could ultimately have a lasting impact. As reported by many of the informants and participants during the FGD, media self-censorship, police intimidation and brutality, and a lack of access to economic opportunities without government support are reasons why many citizens would not take action even if they have credible information about corruption in extractive contracts.

In a country where more than two-thirds of the population live in rural areas and believe that any information has to be mediated through government administration to be credible, the pursuit of a single focus issue such as information disclosure faces serious challenges in triggering SPA for government accountability unless complementary interventions are used.

“Any information provided by CSO, there is counter information to say that ‘beware of these people’. They have agenda to manipulate the citizens. As a result, many people don’t trust other sources of information except the state” (Senior Frelimo Party Member in Maputo, 13 March 2018).

Mozambique Joins Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative

In 2009, the Government of Mozambique voluntarily joined the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). This opened the door for CSOs to be involved in a governance dialogue with the government and private corporations. Before joining the EITI, information on the extractive industry was a closely guarded secret. In 2013, Mozambique received a ‘failing’ composite score of 37% in the Resource Governance Index. Since becoming a member of the multi-stakeholder group in 2013, the CIP has led a campaign to make information disclosure a matter of public discourse and debate, with the aim of both empowering citizens to claim their rights and encouraging for pro-accountability institutions such as Parliament and Public Prosecution to act on the basis of new information. International development partners, such as DfID, Norway and Dutch Development Cooperations, and the World Bank are also supporting transparency initiatives.

Using process tracing techniques and mixed data collected over a period of 12 months, the study reveals intriguing findings that suggest that EITI, CIP, other CSOs and development partners need to recalibrate their strategies for promoting accountability. It shows that the likelihood of citizens and pro-accountability institutions of using information to pursue SPA is highly affected by:

- economic vulnerability
- the ‘party list’ as mode of electing the people’s representation in Parliament
- CSOs weak citizens’ mobilisation strategies
- and an institutional culture of ‘submissiveness’ created out of fear of the political regimes.

The research also shows that the ruling government is unafraid of the consequences of exposure, hence information disclosure on its own is ineffective as a strategy for reducing corruption and ensuring accountability. It needs to be accompanied by a credible threat of political action that is translated through citizens’ votes.

Opinions among the 61 participants in 9 focus groups conducted by the study vary, but the majority agree that ‘the nature and structure of politics’, economic vulnerability and the ‘low degree of citizens’ consciousness and civic values’ are critical causes of social and political inaction among Mozambicans and CSOs when information about corruption is disclosed.

Table 1 below shows how varied focus groups ranked the top three of the 18 causal factors of citizens’ social and political inaction. A score of 1 means the major obstacle to SPA for accountability and 3 the least.

Focused group	Ranking of the causes of citizens and institutions’ inaction for government accountability						
	C3	B1	C1	B2	B4	C6	C5
Researchers & Academics	1	3		2	2		
Community Members	3	1					
Provincial CSOs	2	1	1	3	3		
CSOs in Maputo	1		2				
Members of Parliament	2		1			3	
Provincial Government Officers		1	3	2			
Women Groups	1		2				3
Urban Youth		1		2		3	

Notes

- C1: Culture of ‘submissiveness’ (devoid of confrontation and activism).
 C3: Dominance of a single party and the nature of political representation (party list)
 C5: Wide geographical spread of the country;
 C6: Limited independent media (state centred and private self-censorship)
 B1: Citizen high levels of illiteracy and inadequate civic values
 B2: High levels of economic vulnerability and poverty
 B4: CSOs’ inability to mobilise citizens

“Historically we’re a passive people. We heard about the hidden public debt and Sasol contract but didn’t act because it’s not in our nature to do so especially when the issue is not directly related to you. Information disclosure is important but fear is a justification for why people don’t act on the basis of information” (FGD with provincial CSOs in Pemba, 19 March 2018).

“Last year the youth wanted to demonstrate but saw police helicopters that intimidated us. Professor Macuane had been shot and a civil right advocate (Joao Massango) had been abducted and beaten. Who’s not afraid?” (FGD with Mozambican urban youth in Maputo, 16 March 2018)

In Mozambique the fact that development partners have reacted strongly to reports on corruption, such as the report published by the audit firm Kroll Associates in which it was revealed that there was US\$2m hidden public debt, has helped to amplify the voices of CSOs. But in the extractive sector, such amplification of voices appears to have been tempered by the need to avoid stirring new forms of conflict and insecurity. This is especially the case with some of the resource enclaves considered to be in opposition areas.

“.... in such a fragile context where there is always a simmering conflict between Frelimo and Renamo, unguarded information disclosure can trigger serious conflict and potential escalation of the war. Fragile context matters because it shapes people’s unwillingness to take SPA” (Interview with a development partner in Mozambique in November 2017).

The government for its part has presented natural resource extraction as a unified national project and clamped down on dissenting actions through intimidation. In June 2015, when Centro Terra Viva (CTV) took a court action against US oil and gas company Anadarko and the government over the installation of an on-shore gas processing plant without adequate consultation, requesting the compensation and resettlement of over 5,000 people from the Afungi Peninsula, the government accused CTV of sabotaging the project. This led the police to arrest and detain the organisation’s leaders.

This argument about the need to preserve state stability makes sense to many stakeholders in the country because without it, economic growth and social development are unattainable. But there is no reason to think that maintaining state stability is incompatible with the objectives of promoting accountability of government through SPA. In fact recent history of conflict and state instability in Africa shows that it is inequality, social and political injustice and corruption that are the major causes of state instability, rather than citizens’ action.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Based on the study’s findings and conclusions, we offer the following policy and practice recommendations to actors involved in information disclosure and accountability work in Mozambique:

MEITI must go beyond supporting reconciliation and validation reports

Mozambique EITI reports fail to go beyond the corridors of the Maputo elite and members of the multi-stakeholder group, and reach out to the provinces, mining communities, pro-accountability institutions and wider public to trigger SPA. As many CSOs interviewed for the study indicated, the MEITI should move beyond simply issuing reports towards supporting actions by CSOs and state accountability institutions. It is not enough to disclose information such as the failure of the central government to transfer 2.75% of extractive revenue to local governments for community development. MEITI must also inform key stakeholders what action needs to be taken to ensure that the

government fulfills its legal obligations. Otherwise the EITI fails to impact corruption in a context where 'naming and shaming' does not deter people with access to power and state resources.

CSOs need to intensify strategies for grassroots mobilisation

CIP and other CSOs must improve their outreach and advocacy work by developing affiliations with grassroots organisations and to consider facilitating the mobilisation of citizen action for social accountability. CSOs need to continue their dialogue with the ruling government but they must also be prepared to dissent if dialogue fails. They should consider taking legal action to seek redress in a context where horizontal accountability by state institutions is weak.

Information disclosure should be complemented by other mechanisms for achieving accountability, with citizens acting as a formidable counterbalance through their individual activism. CSOs need to embark on a programme of education, conscientisation and civic campaigns to facilitate citizen demand for accountability through their votes. While literacy levels are low in Mozambique, other forms of education such as increasing citizen civic awareness and consciousness by community radio, local theatre groups, songs, community bazaars, etc. will be critical to move from information disclosure to real empowerment. Reference is made to the work that Kaleidoscopio is doing on 'accountability in popular culture' in Mozambique. The policy implications are that unless there is an interaction between information disclosure and government reputation that subsequently leads to the risk of power lost, accountability of government to the citizens is unlikely to occur.

Donor support to encourage government to promote accountability

External support for information disclosure is an important element in fixing accountability failure but this is not enough in the Mozambican context. As well as providing support for information disclosure initiatives, external organisations (donors and aid agencies) should invest in CSOs delivering programmes which are building and promoting citizen consciousness/awareness and educational campaigns focusing on civic responsibilities and political advocacy. Additionally, given the context in Mozambique, our research suggests that "information disclosure" initiatives must go hand in hand with strategies aiming to improve economic livelihoods.

Written by Nicholas Awortwi¹ & Adriano Nuvunga²

Further Reading

Awortwi, N. & Nuvunga, A. (2018). Sound of One Hand Clapping: Information Disclosure and Accountability Outcome of Extractive Sector Governance in Mozambique. Draft IDS Working Paper, September 2018

¹ Nicholas Awortwi is the Director of African Governance Institute based in The Hague, Netherlands. awortwi@gmail.com; director@afrugl.org

² Adriano Nuvunga is the Director of ADS – youth, leadership and developmental think and do tank, based in Maputo, Mozambique. nuvunga@adsmoz.org

Fox, J. (2016). 'Scaling accountability through vertically integrated civil society policy monitoring and advocacy' IDS/Accountability Research Centre Working Paper. December 2016

Note

Action for Empowerment and Accountability (A4EA) is an international research programme which explores how social and political action can contribute to empowerment and accountability in fragile, conflict, and violent settings, with a particular focus on Egypt, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nigeria and Pakistan. It is led by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and funded with UK aid from the UK government, however the views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.