

> ACHIEVEMENTS

The learning review of the SABI Programme found that overall, citizen demand for improved services can result in better education, health care, and social protection when citizens are accompanied by an integrated programme of support. The SABI programme moved citizens through a process of survey, situation analysis, prioritization of needs, understanding of how to get the changes they seek, and accompaniment through ward, district, and even national levels. The hundreds of concrete results that citizens achieved – from increased teacher presence in schools, approval of new schools for Ministry of Education support, more reliable replenishment of medications at health centres, to new opportunities to speak directly with government ministry staff – occurred thanks to this well thought out and well managed process. This success was based on the trust built among citizens and local authorities and service providers, which has been in short supply in recent years, most notably during the Ebola crisis. The strongest result of the programme was building the capability, opportunity, and motivation of targeted citizens to hold their District Councils and Service Providers to account. There was broad consensus among participants and outside observers that District Councils, Ward Development Committees, and front-line service providers are responding more effectively to citizens.

SABI's patient approach was the key to the success of the programme: starting with communities and building capacity and motivation to act, helping them find opportunities to influence the quality and quantity of services, and helping them to follow up at ward, district, and sometimes national level. The programme successfully countered citizen feelings of disempowerment and apathy, and strengthened their ability to hold service providers and local authorities to account. While the programme focussed on community, ward, and district levels, there were also notable achievements with national government.

> ONGOING IMPACT

Since the programme is ending, only some of the benefits are likely to be sustained. Those changes which are based in the capacity and attitudes of people are likely to carry on. Primary among these are beliefs: a renewed sense of agency among citizens, and an attitude on the part of service providers that their role is to serve citizens, rather than “doing them a favour by doing their jobs.” Practices like action planning, understanding of accountable governance pathways, media engagement, advocacy for rights

AT A GLANCE SABI Programme

SABI was a multi-year citizen-led government accountability programme funded by UK Aid and led by Christian Aid designed to improve government services. Since 2016, the SABI programme worked in all 16 districts of Sierra Leone to strengthen community-led accountability. It contributed to creating a more informed and empowered citizenry, and increased awareness of, and demand for, improved service delivery.

The programme was implemented by a consortium led by Christian Aid, including Restless Development (RD), Social Development Direct (SDDirect), and Humentum from the United Kingdom, and Local Implementing Partners FOCUS 1000, Rehabilitation and Development Agency (RADA), Social Enterprise Development (SEND), and Sierra Leone Social Aid Volunteers (SLSAV). As the SABI programme has ended, Christian Aid has commissioned a review to ascertain key learnings in relation to what has worked and what has not to inform strategic thinking for uptake by Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) sister programmes and the wider sector.

to disability services, social inclusion, and the use of policy briefs represent ways of working that people have learned that will continue as long as they remain active in public life.

Other changes which require funding or considerable organisational resources are less certain to carry on. Regardless of their value – which is high – activities like the Citizen Perception Survey (CPS), District and National Service Summits, joint monitoring visits, and small grants support are unlikely to be sustained. However, since the concepts and methods for these activities have already been worked out, institutions like government or civil society organisations could readily pick them up and carry on if they have the funding to do so.

> RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The SABI programme demonstrates that services improve because people are better able to articulate their needs and know how to work to make them come to fruition. Any programmes seeking to improve service delivery should incorporate the SABI practices that **build capacity at community, ward, and district level of citizens to understand the issues, generate data, build trust in public service institutions, and generate concrete, feasible plans of action.**
2. **Build capacity at District Councils** through organizational development interventions. Possible tools from the SABI programme are Policy Literacy Sessions, joint monitoring visits with Ministry, Departments and Agencies, District Service Summits, social inclusion practices, and Citizen Perception Surveys.
3. **Build capacity of Ward Development Committees** through organizational development interventions. Possible tools from the SABI programme are Policy Literacy Sessions, guidance on role and function of Ward Development Committees, and social inclusion practices.
4. **Provide support to national level policy analysis and advocacy** to align ministry policies with the demands of citizens and needs of local authorities.
5. **Support civil society organisations** to continue to promote accountability from local to national level. Support might take the form of grants programmes to support local staff and activities or promotion of networks for organizational development or advocacy.
6. Programmes to promote accountability of services should adopt and **expand the approach to gender equality and social inclusion** to promote Sustainable Development Goal 5, Achieve Gender Equality, Social Inclusion and Human Rights for all. Specifically, programmes should a) model the change they want to see in inclusion in their practices; b) ensure that all programme partners practice inclusive approaches and use gender and social inclusion-sensitive analysis and monitoring, evaluation, and learning methods, and c) encourage collective learning about ways in which pathways of accountability differ for men, women, and excluded groups.
7. **Create a strategic communications plan** for all accountability-oriented programmes to publicize successes and spread the message that participation and accountability work can be effective.