Case Study
Community
data
literacy for
demand driven
change

Community data literacy for demand driven change

MUKASIRI
SIBANDA

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ZELA
PWYP Zimbabwe

CONTEXT

The need for this pilot stemmed from the realisation that calls by CSOs and CBOs for improved transparency and accountability in the management of mineral wealth tends to generally overshadow the use of available data to demand accountability. There was also the realisation that publicly available data from local sources, such as local government budgets and financial statements, has so far not been used to its full extent to empower citizen participation in local public financial management systems. The data from the EU, UK and Canada mandatory disclosure of payments made to governments by Multinational Corporations (MNCs) in the extractives also needs to be used more thoroughly.

Furthermore, community demands for greater transparency and accountability in the management of mineral resources by the local government and mining companies have thus far not been specific and cogent. This was due to a lack of clarity on what information the community needed, how to access and extract the data, and finally a lack of know how on analysing data to advocate for necessary change. Another motivation for the pilot was the fact that these communities hardly benefit from mineral wealth extraction but are yearning for opportunities to hold government and mining companies to account for Local Economic and Social Development (LESD).

Thus far, LESD leverage on mineral wealth extraction has proved to be elusive. Ideally, tax revenue, particularly for resource rich local authorities, should play an important part in financing LESD programmes. Thus, equitable tax deals between local government and mining companies and transparency in tax payments, expenditure and results are absolutely critical to ensure that local communities benefit from mining activities.

Given that Zimbabwe is not part of the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) and that its homegrown version, the Zimbabwe Revenue Transparency Initiative (ZMRTI), is hardly operational, the lack of transparency is glaring. In addition, given that mining is affected by global factors such as value chain systems, the financial system, supply of equipment and evolving markets, among others, the need to look for disclosure opportunities beyond borders to enhance accountability at home also became apparent.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The communities involved were equipped with skills to assess local mining tax revenue so that they could use data to ask for LESD finance to come from mineral wealth extraction. The data that was used included local government budget statements, financial statements and mandatory disclosure of payments made to the government by AngloAmerican's Unki Mine project in Zimbabwe.

To understand and document the specific information needs of communities and the change which they can effectuate using data, the "Data User Story" template was used. This was done to prove the community led demand for greater transparency in the management and use of mineral wealth, especially in regards to local tax revenues.

Accessing information on tax agreements between local governments and mining companies, budgets and financial reports of local government was challenging for both the Marange and Shurugwi community members involved in the project. In addition, CBOs didn't use their right to access information at the local government level, mainly because of their own lack of awareness and understanding of what information they needed.

PROJECT IMPACT

Transparency deficits related to the exploitation of Marange diamonds have been a topical issue globally, the "missing $15 billion" says it all. However, CBOs in Marange are keen to understand how good or bad the tax agreements are between diamond mining companies and the local government (Mutare Rural District Council). The same applies to annual tax revenue payments and any earnings accrued from diamond mining activities at local government level from 2010-2015. Community representatives engaging Unki mine on LESD allege that they are frequently reminded that the company pays taxes to the local government which should ideally finance the provision of local services they need. Frustratingly, there has not been disclosure of taxes paid to Tongogara Rural District Council (TRDC) by local government and mining companies. Hence the community's interest in finding out whether the new mandatory disclosure of company payments to government can help to promote tax transparency.

CONCLUSION

By spoon feeding information to communities, CSOs interventions can sometimes be barriers to change. Instead the focus should be on equipping communities with skills and knowledge to determine and prioritise their information needs, to sift through the data, analyse, and use it to support their demands. For this to happen, the community data extractors programme, which only involved 20 community data extractors during the pilot project, would need to be broadened. Additionally the role of local government in the fight for greater transparency and accountability has to be optimally explored and exploited. It is also important to empower communities to deal with taxation as a tool for development so that they seek support from the local government rather than relying on CSR which is largely voluntary and unreliable with minimum accountability safeguards. It was also clear that local leaders became keen to take part in the data extractors programme as they realised that with improved data literacy skills, they are better equipped to influence local development leveraged on the abundant mineral wealth in their localities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- CSOs must focus on empowering communities to be data extractors particularly on tracking the flow of money at local government level.
- There is a need to raise awareness of and to motivate communities to participate in processes such as budget consultations and ask hard questions on transparency such as tax agreements and taxes paid by mining companies.
- The data extractors programme must have a multi-year focus to consolidate and sustain outcomes on community data driven advocacy.
- The data extractors programme should also target local leaders such as the District Administrators (Das), councilors and traditional chiefs who are keen on data literacy as a tool to promote development hinged on mineral extraction.

This case study is part of Publish What You Pay's Data Extractors programme, a global initiative which trains PWYP members and activists from across our network to use extractives data.

This programme aims to create a network of activists who can in turn share their knowledge with local communities. Our goal is to enable citizens all over the world to ensure natural resources are managed for the benefit of society as a whole. The PWYP Data Extractors programme does this by:

Training - Data Extractors learn how to find data, analyse it and use it to ask questions of both governments and companies. The programme merges technical skills with activism through hands-on workshops, skills sharing and online learning opportunities

Connecting - The programme connects PWYP members from all over the world, facilitating collaboration, mentoring, peer learning and offers an exciting opportunity to create unique projects which are relevant to local concerns.

Uncovering - Data Extractors expose discrepancies in company and government reports and payments to expose corrupt practices the resource curse, and raise questions for further investigation.

Communicating - Data Extractors can use data to communicate with a variety of stakeholders and engage in decision-making processes that affect them, using evidence- based data.

Through their case studies, the PWYP Data Extractors use examples and data that is publicly available to hold governments and companies to account.

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which have helped make this programme
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**WORK WITH US TO UNCOVER THE STORIES
HIDDEN BEHIND EXTRACTIVES DATA!**

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