

Engaging politicians in community development



Matt Freer

Church leaders presenting the memorandum of understanding to community members at a community meeting in Mapalo.

Mapalo is an urban community on the outskirts of Ndola in Zambia. It is a community known for its economic poverty. The roads are unpaved, which prevents the movement of goods to market. Many people in the community do not have official titles to the land they live on. Twenty per cent of the people in Mapalo are living with HIV and do not have access to antiretroviral treatment. This article looks at how a group of church leaders turned their passion for community transformation into action by engaging with local politicians.

Since the year 2000, Jubilee Centre has been working with church leaders in Mapalo to equip the local churches to be vehicles of transformation in their community. In 2003, Jubilee Centre brought together the leaders of churches, youth groups, women's groups and political groups to discuss the 'Mapalo that we the community want'. They decided that, while they welcomed help from outside the community, they themselves wanted to identify their needs and be the ones leading the development of their community.

Until that time, Mapalo's experience of political representation had been poor. The community had never seen their Member of Parliament in Mapalo during his five years of office. While the local churches were committed to improving their community, they knew that the support of the community's political representative was essential. National elections were expected in September 2006, so the pastors saw this as an opportunity to engage politicians in meeting the needs of the community. In

the spring they drafted a memorandum of understanding, or social contract, for the politicians to sign. By advocating for the commitment of candidates to meeting the needs of the community, they could gain support from those who were elected for the coming years.

Developing the memorandum of understanding

The pastors started by identifying the needs of their community – including the paving of roads, introducing a secondary school, upgrading the clinic to a hospital, getting piped water and providing a centre that would address issues related to HIV in the community.

The pastors then drafted the memorandum of understanding and organised a meeting for community leaders to provide input. The memorandum was then improved.

As well as seeking commitment and support from the politicians to meeting the stated needs, the memorandum included a commitment from the community. To show their passion for change in their community, it was stated that the

In this issue

- 3 Editorial
- 4 Accountability to the community
- 5 Resources
- 6 Accountability in relief work in Kashmir, Pakistan
- 9 Financial accountability
- 10 Encouraging the local church to be accountable to the community
- 11 Bible study
- 12 Supporting Water Councils in Honduras
- 13 Letters
- 14 Accountability in providing food aid in Zimbabwe
- 16 'Saving for Change' groups

Footsteps is a quarterly paper, linking health and development workers worldwide. Tearfund, publisher of *Footsteps*, hopes that it will provide the stimulus of new ideas and enthusiasm. It is a way of encouraging Christians of all nations as they work together towards creating wholeness in our communities.

Footsteps is free of charge to individuals working to promote health and development. It is available in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish. Donations are welcomed.

Readers are invited to contribute views, articles, letters and photos.

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An outline of the memorandum of understanding

- Who the memorandum is between – community and politicians
- An introduction to the community's desire to develop
- What the community is calling elected politicians to do
- The contribution of Mapalo community
- The seven stated needs of the community with details of the current situation and the future situation if the need is met
- Space for signatures of community members
- Space for signatures of politicians.

community would contribute 25 per cent of the labour and resources necessary for the needs to be met.

Mobilising support

A meeting was held where the memorandum of understanding was presented to the wider community. Copies of the memorandum were printed, with additional pages for people to sign their names in support of it. The community leaders were given copies and sent off to get support from the whole community. Pastors informed their congregations, market leaders informed the market stall holders, and people talked to their neighbours. In total, 3,500 residents signed the memorandum of understanding, showing that they agreed it outlined their needs.

Getting support from politicians

Two leaders represented Mapalo at an open press conference for all the candidates standing for election. The leaders challenged the candidates to sign the memorandum of understanding, and invited them to a community meeting to publicly show their support. The community leaders followed this up by sending a copy of the memorandum and an invitation letter to each candidate.

In September 2006, the electoral candidates, pastors, community leaders and over 1,000 community members attended a community meeting. All the candidates standing to be councillors and three of the candidates standing for parliament went to the meeting. Parts of the memorandum of understanding were read aloud and representative

community members stated the size and urgency of the needs.

At the end of the meeting the candidates were given the opportunity to sign the memorandum of understanding. This would be a visible demonstration of their commitment to meet most of the stated needs in the first three years of their term if elected. All the candidates present signed the memorandum, and copies were sent to the district court for public documentation.

News of the meeting spread rapidly and was heard on radios across Zambia. The candidates who had been unable or unwilling to attend the meeting quickly organised a visit to Mapalo in order to sign the memorandum.



Pastor Peter encouraging community members to attend a meeting related to the memorandum of understanding.

Matt Freer

Results

After the community meeting and before the elections, the memorandum had an impact within and outside Mapalo:

- A community youth initiative in Mapalo, which had tried to get government funding for the previous three years, received government approval within two weeks of the meeting.
- Some of the key church leaders were personally harassed. They turned down many proposals to attach themselves to political parties, and were interviewed by the police to ensure their political neutrality. Their pure motive for the development of their community withstood all examination and intimidation.
- A community in a neighbouring constituency started to develop its own memorandum of understanding for use in advocacy work after the elections.
- The Electoral Commission of Zambia, which is responsible for education before the elections, showed Mapalo's memorandum of understanding at over thirty community meetings as an example of engaging with politicians.

After the elections, as the elected councillors and Member of Parliament had signed the memorandum of understanding, the community of Mapalo had a powerful tool to keep the politicians accountable. The community leaders wrote a formal letter to the newly-elected politicians, which was copied to stakeholders in government ministries and opposition parties. The letter congratulated them on their election win and reminded them of their commitment to meeting the needs of Mapalo during their term of political office.

Since the elections in 2006, a number of community needs have been addressed:

- The government has agreed to fund a new middle school. Church and community members have started to clear the land where the school will be built and are ready to contribute labour to the project. The government is planning to upgrade the current basic school to a high school. The community is lobbying the government to do this as soon as the middle school is built.



Nathan Namfeka

Candidates signing the memorandum of understanding at the community meeting.

- The government funded 13 churches to carry out HIV prevention work. Over six months, churches trained peer educators and mobilised youths to spread messages about HIV prevention.
- The Kafubu Water and Sewerage Company has constructed outlets for people to buy safe water, so the proportion of people with access to safe water has increased from 20 to 35 per cent.

- During the rainy season, the only bridge linking the community to the city centre is almost washed away. Each year the community come together to do some repairs. After lobbying the Member of Parliament and local government, some engineers were recently sent to assess the bridge so that sustainable improvements can be made.
- The government has promised to upgrade the community from an illegal settlement to a site and service community. This means that people will soon be holding titles to land where they have built houses.

The community is now united and its elected leaders are accountable to them. Community members know what their needs are and who to communicate with when they cannot solve them through their own efforts.

This article was written by various staff at Jubilee Centre on behalf of the people of Mapalo community.

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EDITORIAL



Rachel Blackman
Editor

Accountability is becoming a commonly used word in development work. Accountability is about good relationships. It is about taking our responsibility seriously and explaining our decisions and actions to others, such as donors, peers and the people we serve. We also have a role in holding others accountable to us and to poor people.

This issue looks at accountability in different situations at community level. The first article looks at how church pastors acted to hold politicians accountable to a community in Zambia. An example of a church being accountable to the community is given on page 10. The idea of accountability to communities in NGO work is introduced on page 4 and there are two articles from Zimbabwe and Pakistan that look at how it can be carried out in practice. The centre pages focus on financial accountability and provide practical ideas for keeping treasurers accountable. There are also articles about accountability in water councils and savings groups.

We hope this issue provides ideas that we can all put into practice in our service of others.

Future issues will focus on food security and migration.

Rachel

Accountability to the community

by David Bainbridge

For many years, the word 'accountability' was used mainly in connection with the relationship between organisations and donors. Donors wanted to ensure that organisations spent their money wisely, and organisations wanted to account for how funds were spent and impress donors to ensure future funding. However, the focus on accountability is also beginning to move towards the relationship between the organisation and people it serves. This means that the organisation takes account of the needs, concerns and capacities of community members and explains its actions and decisions to them.

Accountability to the community is often broken down into four main areas:

1 Participation

Community participation is essential in any relief or development work and has been good practice for many years. However, sometimes 'participation' has been weak. For example:

- 'Participation' might mean that community members are simply informed about the project that has been planned.
- Community members may be asked to 'participate' by contributing labour or resources but have no influence over decisions related to the project itself.
- Community members may have been given an opportunity to identify their needs and contribute ideas to project planning, but are not listened to when the project is being implemented.

When community members participate meaningfully in relief or development projects, it is more likely that the project will be effective because it meets real needs. The work is also more likely to be sustainable, because there is a greater sense of ownership by the community.

Community participation should be encouraged in:

- identifying needs, capacities and priorities

- identifying solutions and actions to meet needs. Local knowledge, expertise and capacities should be drawn on
- implementing projects, such as agreeing selection criteria or organising labour and resources
- monitoring and evaluating progress. When community members are given an opportunity to comment on the work being carried out and suggest changes, the project can be made more effective.

The process of involving community members puts them at the centre of the work and increases their sense of dignity.



Participation of community members helps to make the project more effective and leads to community ownership of the work.

2 Transparency

Transparency is about being open with communities about the work being carried out. This means sharing information about:

- the organisation – its purpose, objectives and values
- the project – plans, progress, costs and people involved.

When the community is informed about the project, it can more effectively participate and can hold the organisation to account for its commitments.

3 Feedback

Providing an opportunity for community members to give feedback on the project is an important part of being accountable. This could be in the form of complaints or suggestions.

There are many ways of welcoming feedback, such as having a box for written comments or enabling verbal feedback by telephone or to staff members in person. If the feedback is verbal, it should be written down by the staff member and checked with the community member to ensure it accurately states what they said. People are more likely to give honest feedback if they can give it in confidence. It is also helpful if both male and female staff are available to receive comments about the project.

Community members need to be informed about how the feedback will be dealt with.

Sometimes staff will need to discuss a response with each other before taking action. Community members should be informed regularly about progress. When changes are made to the project as a result of feedback, the community should be informed. When a community sees that they are being listened to and that their comments make a difference, they will be more likely to participate in the project, which will in turn improve its effectiveness.

4 Learning

Organisations that are accountable to the people they serve are committed to improving the quality of their work. This means demonstrating that they listen to community members and take action accordingly. It is important that learning related to the project is recorded and that it is communicated to communities and other stakeholders. Learning is usually recorded in writing, such as case studies and reports. Evaluations during and after the completion of the project are a good source of learning. This principle of community accountability is often easier to carry out if there is a culture of learning within the organisation as a whole. For this reason, it can be helpful to employ staff who are dedicated to documenting learning, or to include in everyone's job description a responsibility to record learning.

It is good to share learning with the community as this strengthens relationships. In communities where many people are non-literate, methods of sharing learning could include meetings, radio, role play or posters.

Ensuring that a project is accountable to communities requires an investment of time, effort and funds, but many activities are low-cost and simple and can make a significant difference to the effectiveness of the project and the lives of the communities. Examples of how accountability to the community works in practice are given in the articles on pages 6 and 14.

David Bainbridge is Tearfund's Disaster Management Director. He is currently leading a Tearfund initiative to support accountability to the community in all Tearfund-funded work.
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tilz website www.tearfund.org/tilz Tearfund's international publications can be downloaded free of charge from our website. Search for any topic to help in your work.

Impact measurement and accountability in emergencies: The good enough guide

This guide provides field workers with guidelines on how to be accountable to local people and measure programme impact in emergency situations. It emphasises simple and practical solutions and encourages the user to choose tools that are safe, quick and easy to implement.



The book is available in English, French, Spanish and Arabic. It costs £6.95 and can be ordered online from the UK or downloaded free of cost at: <http://publications.oxfam.org.uk/oxfam/display.asp?isbn=0855985941>.

To find out whether an Oxfam distributor exists locally, go to: <http://publications.oxfam.org.uk/oxfam/distributors.asp>

Human resource management

This new ROOTS book aims to help Christian development organisations to consider and improve how they recruit, develop and look after their staff. Many of the tools in this book can be used to make improvements at low cost, with enormous benefits. Some of the tools help organisations to employ the right people, while others enable organisations to develop good systems. The combination of good people and good systems leads to an effective organisation – one that achieves its mission and purpose.



To order, please contact:

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Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (HAP)

The Humanitarian Accountability Partnership is an organisation that seeks to encourage those involved in humanitarian work to be accountable to the people they serve. Organisations can gain certification from HAP if they achieve a number of 'benchmarks'. Tearfund is one of the founding members of HAP and has been awarded certification for its emergency response programmes.

Benchmark 1: humanitarian quality management – setting up policies and procedures to enable the organisation to be accountable to communities. This includes committing to codes and standards that ensure quality.

Benchmark 2: transparency – making information about the organisation and the project available to communities and others.

Benchmark 3: community participation – enabling community members and their representatives to participate in programme decisions.

Benchmark 4: staff competencies – ensuring that staff have the right qualities and the ability to implement the accountability mechanisms used.

Benchmark 5: handling of complaints – establishing and implementing complaints-handling procedures that are effective, accessible and safe for community members and others.

Benchmark 6: continual improvement – setting up a process where lessons are learnt and the accountability system can be continually improved.

For further information and case studies on humanitarian accountability visit the HAP website www.hapinternational.org.

The *Guide to the HAP Standard* can be ordered or downloaded free of charge from <http://publications.oxfam.org.uk/oxfam/display.asp?isbn=085598600X>. See above for information about local Oxfam distributors.

Accountability in relief work in Kashmir, Pakistan

The earthquake in Kashmir in 2005 provided an opportunity for Tearfund to develop its understanding and practice of accountability to the people it serves. The earthquake struck the Kashmir region of Pakistan, killing approximately 73,000 people and leaving an estimated 3.3 million homeless. Tearfund set up a programme to supply emergency shelter as well as meet the water and sanitation needs of the affected communities.



Temporary shelter built with materials distributed by Tearfund in Bagh District.

The emergency phase of the programme involved distribution of materials for shelters and latrines. The communities participated by contributing their building skills and were able to use the materials provided to build longer-term housing later on. When the initial emergency of surviving the harsh winter had passed, the rehabilitation phase of the programme started. This included rehabilitation of water supply and public health promotion. It also involved disaster risk reduction work, such as the promotion of earthquake-proof building designs and community-based earthquake preparedness, such as evacuation drills.

A number of activities were carried out to ensure accountability to community members. The budget for these activities including the salaries of specialist staff

and printing costs, notice boards and suggestion boxes, came to approximately 2 per cent of the total programme budget. The HAP benchmarks outlined on page 5 can be applied to Tearfund's response in Kashmir.

BENCHMARK 2 Making information publicly available

Information was given about Tearfund as an organisation, as well as details of the programmes such as criteria for selecting those who would be helped, what they would be entitled to (such as the content and usage of the shelter packs, and latrine kits), how the programme would be implemented, and diagrams of the water systems that were to be constructed. This information was made available in formats

appropriate for the type of information: on notice boards, on posters, through radio, verbal communication from community leaders and verbal communication by staff members. All information was given in the local language in verbal communication and in Urdu for written communication. The communities were also made aware of their expected participation in the work, and how the feedback mechanism for suggestions and complaints would work.

Regular surveys were carried out to find out whether community members felt listened to and whether they were aware of the information Tearfund was sharing. This enabled the team to improve their communication methods. Community members were provided with phone numbers to contact programme staff.

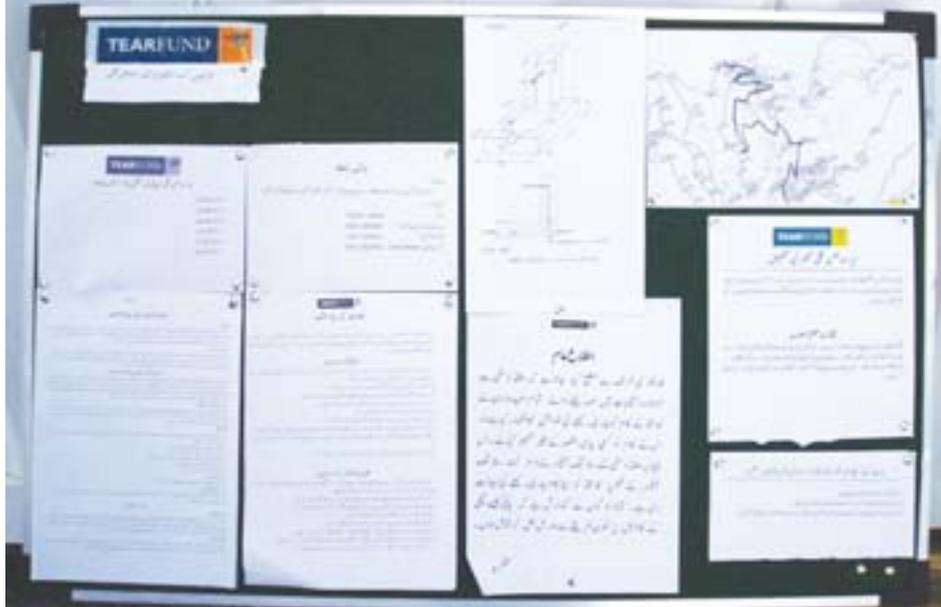
BENCHMARK 3 Community participation in decision-making

Communities were encouraged to actively participate in the programme in three key ways:

Consultation When asked about tools needed for construction, the community members said that the basic toolkit should include a hammer. After that, a hammer was included in distributions. Community members were involved in decision-making about where the distributions would be carried out, as well as identifying stakeholders such as community leaders, teachers, doctors and religious leaders.

Community committees Communities formed committees which were given responsibility for monitoring the work and representing Tearfund in the villages. Community members were selected according to criteria that were put on a notice board in the village, such as having a fair representation of different tribes within the group. The committees were asked to monitor and report on how distributions went. Their feedback was used to improve future programme activities.

Voluntary involvement and use of resources Community members were encouraged to volunteer to participate in the distribution of shelter kits. They were kept informed of the number of shelter kits



Tearfund notice board making information relating to the programme publicly available.

available, and were encouraged to use their own resources – where available – to help build temporary shelters.

BENCHMARK 4 Competent staff

An Accountability Officer and two Accountability Assistants were employed. They received training throughout the programme. In addition, all Tearfund programme staff were given training on accountability, since most of them were involved in accountability activities in some way, such as writing reports, managing the response to suggestions and complaints, and managing conflicts in the communities.

BENCHMARK 5 Complaints procedures

An important part of accountability to communities was establishing a mechanism to deal with complaints. This was a flexible and safe mechanism that was set up very early in the programme, which enabled people to complain in ways that were appropriate for them. For some, this meant going in person to the Tearfund office. Others would write notes and drop them in the suggestion boxes, while others complained verbally to the Accountability staff. All verbal comments were written down so they could be dealt with in the same way as written complaints.

Complaints were all recorded in a database and were dealt with as soon as possible. The Accountability staff reported to the communities on the progress of Tearfund's

response to each complaint. Research was carried out in response to some complaints. For example, after the first distribution of soap, some people complained that the soap was making them itch. The Accountability staff spoke to community members in order to understand the extent of the problem. Tearfund's logistics department then asked the soap supplier to provide a different type of soap. The community members were satisfied with the quality of the new soap provided and were pleased that Tearfund had listened to their complaint.

Lessons learnt

- It is often difficult to identify the people who most need help after a disaster. As the accountability activities involved informing the communities about programme design, they were able to identify and involve the most vulnerable such as widows, orphans and children.

- The accountability activities gave communities a greater sense of ownership, so they were more involved in the programme. Because Tearfund listened to their suggestions and complaints, community members felt their opinions were valued and respected, which in turn gave them a greater sense of dignity. In response to the feedback, some changes were made to the programme design in order to make it more relevant to the needs of the communities.
- As the accountability activities increased communication between Tearfund and the people it serves, staff felt more secure in the programme area. This greater trust also meant that innovative programme design was more accepted by the communities.
- The complaints procedures meant an increased workload for all staff, not only those directly responsible for accountability activities. Making changes to the programme and responding to the issues raised by the community requires time, energy and flexibility.

The benefits of investing in accountability systems were much greater than the challenges. As one community member said, *'Tearfund has incorporated people's views in their programme and always helped us in the way we wanted.'*

This article is based on a longer case study by Shaukat Iqbal, Sarah Dilloway and Eleanor Tuck.

For further information please contact kate.bowen@tearfund.org

Examples of complaints and how they were dealt with

- **'Influential community groups sitting on committees are misleading Tearfund.'**
Following this complaint a guideline for establishing committees was drafted, which included criteria to ensure impartial representation of communities. Tearfund also ensured that vulnerable groups were able to participate actively.
- **'As Tearfund is working in our area no other NGO is willing to provide shelter here. Therefore Tearfund should provide shelter material to every household.'**

As a result of this complaint, Tearfund shared the list of people receiving help with another humanitarian organisation working in the area that was able to provide shelter materials to those who had not received the Tearfund shelter kits.

- **'The roofing sheets provided are difficult to use – we would prefer to have shorter lengths of sheeting.'**
Future distributions used shorter length sheets.

Financial accountability

When dealing with money on behalf of others, accountability is crucial. The people given responsibility to manage the money need to be able to show that they are being good stewards of what is entrusted to them. It is important that they are protected from being tempted to use the money for their own purposes.



Richard Hanson / Tearfund

People given responsibility for a sum of money include staff in the finance department of an NGO, a church treasurer, a treasurer of a village development committee, credit and savings group or water committee, and so on. The most commonly used term is 'treasurer'.

It is important that those who give responsibility to the treasurer set up accountability mechanisms. The treasurer is usually directly accountable to representatives of the group that holds the fund. This could be NGO leadership or church leaders. In turn, this group is accountable to the people who donated the money and the people who benefit from the initiatives it is spent on.

In many countries there are laws that encourage good financial accountability, but the laws are not always obeyed. With smaller amounts of money it can be easy for accountability to be ignored. Yet financial accountability mechanisms can be easy to set up. This article explores the principles of financial accountability and some practical steps that can be taken to ensure good financial management.

Key principles

PLANNING

A budget is essential. A budget is a plan of how much income is expected during a given period of time (usually a year) and how the money will be used. Without a budget, the treasurer will not know how to spend the money. A budget shows how much the treasurer is allowed to spend and what it should be spent on. This budget should be agreed by representatives of the group. In an NGO or church, this could be the leadership team or governing body. In community groups, the budget may be agreed by all members of the group if the group is small.

RECORDING

Accurate and complete records of all financial transactions are needed to show how money has been used. Financial transactions include income (money coming in), expenditure (money going out) and money that is loaned or borrowed. These should be recorded at the time of receipt or payment to avoid confusion later on. At the end of the year, financial

transactions should match the amount budgeted, unless any changes have been approved by the wider group.

INTERNAL CONTROLS

These protect assets, protect treasurers, deter theft and help detect errors in the accounting records. One example is ensuring that financial administration tasks are carried out by more than one person to reduce error or fraud (intentional misuse of funds). Another example is having someone other than the treasurer check that the accounting records are regularly maintained and are added up correctly.

MONITORING

Reports help others to monitor progress against budget. They are used by the treasurer to show that he or she has used the money well. Reports are used by the wider group to hold the treasurer accountable. Reports are also useful when raising money and reporting back to donors.

Key activities

WHERE MONEY IS KEPT

Money and records of financial transactions should be kept in a secure place. Cash should be kept in a locked cupboard or safe and only a few named people should have access to the key. This protects the treasurer because the more people there are who can access the funds, the harder it is to keep track of them, or ensure accurate records.

All cash transactions should be recorded in a cash book so the treasurer knows how much cash is in the cash box at any one time. Cash that is not needed for immediate spending commitments should be taken to the bank as soon as possible and a receipt should be obtained.

Accurate and complete records of all financial transactions are needed to show how money has been used

It is important that those who give responsibility to the treasurer set up accountability mechanisms

A bank account specifically for the fund should be set up. Keeping the money in someone's personal bank account should be avoided.

TRANSFERRING MONEY

Supporting documentation should be produced for every transfer of money and should be kept in a secure place. This protects the treasurer as it means that he or she can produce evidence and details of transactions. Types of supporting documentation include invoices, receipts,

an accounts book and bank statements. Receipts should be signed, stamped or produced on official stationery, showing the dates, value and type of transaction. An accounts book contains information about all the transfers of money that are made.

It is not easy to record income from the church offertory or voluntary cash donations. In these cases, the total income after a church service or fundraising day should be counted and documented.

One or two people should be assigned to help the treasurer count the cash to confirm the amount collected. Each of those people should keep the others accountable to ensure that none of them steals any of the money.

A system should be set in place where payments need to be authorised by more than one person. This reduces the opportunity to commit fraud. For example, a bank account could be set up where two signatures are needed on cheques.

EFFECTIVE USE OF MONEY

The treasurer should be provided with a budget that reflects the objectives of the group. Those who hold the treasurer accountable should check the accounts regularly, such as every month. If the treasurer overspends or spends the money on things that are not included in the budget, he or she can be held accountable. Likewise, questions could be asked if the treasurer spends less than budgeted as this could mean that the group's objectives might not be met.

NGOs and churches with a large income should have their financial records audited every year by an independent accountant. The auditor checks all the records and will be able to identify any incomplete accounting or financial mismanagement.

Article compiled by Rachel Blackman.

A simple worksheet to record income and expenditure

This worksheet could be copied and used by a treasurer to record income and expenditure.

- A new worksheet could be used each month. At the beginning of a new month, use the first row to record the balance at the end of the last month. The balance is the amount in the fund.
- The 'From' and 'To' columns can be used to record who was involved in the transaction, such as who the donation was from or who the wages were paid to. This makes it easier to find the invoice or receipt.
- If the transaction involves money coming in, the amount should be entered in the 'Income' column. If the transaction

involves money going out, the amount should be entered in the 'Expenses' column.

- At the end of every row, the balance should be stated. If the row records income, the amount should be added to the balance shown in the row above. If the row records expenditure, the amount should be subtracted from the balance shown in the row above.

Where the treasurer oversees a number of projects, a separate worksheet could be used for each project.

For larger or more complex funds, such as those that involve loans, more complex bookkeeping methods should be used and training should be provided for the treasurer.

Day	Month	From	To	Description	Income	Expenses	Balance
1	3			Starting balance			170.00
4	3	Congregation		Offertory	50.00		220.00
10	3		Smart cars	Hire of mini-bus for youth camp		20.00	200.00
10	3		Fuel station	Fuel for mini-bus		10.00	190.00
11	3	Congregation		Offertory	33.00		223.00
13	3		National electricity	Quarterly electricity bill		30.00	193.00
18	3	Congregation		Offertory	70.00		263.00
21	3		D&A Building Supplies	New church door		15.00	248.00
25	3	Congregation		Offertory	46.00		294.00
30	3		Pastor Philip	Wages		100.00	194.00
30	3		Mary Banda (Youth worker)	Wages		75.00	119.00

Encouraging the local church to be accountable to the community

by Revd Emmanuel Isaya

The church in Mwamadilanha village in Tanzania used to be considered by most community members as meaningless and irresponsible in terms of its relationship with the community. Many church members believed that the church's mission to the community was the responsibility of the evangelist and pastor. The growth of the church therefore depended on the commitment of these chosen and trained church ministers. All this changed when the Diocese of Shinyanga introduced a church and community mobilisation process in Mwamadilanha.

Church and community mobilisation process

This process used Bible studies to help church members to discover that the church exists to do good in every way in its community. After this, church members understood that the church is here on earth as salt and light. They realised that the church needs to take the lead if it

really wants to see transformation in the community.

The church in Mwamadilanha developed the following vision: **seeing the church and community living an abundant life, self-sufficient and free from social, physical, economic and spiritual problems.** This vision gave the church members the courage to go to the

Bible passages that can be used to awaken church members

- *God's purpose for humankind*
Genesis 1:26-31; 2:8-17; 3:1-24
- *God's vision for his people*
Isaiah 65:17-25
- *Pictures of the church*
1 Peter 2:4-12
- *Ministry of Jesus*
Matthew 3:1-2; 4:17, 23-25; 9:35-38
- *The church as salt and light of the world*
Matthew 5:13-16
- *The good Samaritan*
Luke 10:25-37

community to share their dream for the future. They shared the message that the community and the church can live a life that is pleasing to God if they work together to address their problems using resources available in the community.

After hearing this message from the church, the community was amazed that the church had a plan to work together with them in order to raise the standard of living. The community gave the church permission to facilitate participatory meetings to enable them to understand the root causes of local problems as well as resources that could be used to address them.

Impact

The community now views the church as the 'community eye', guiding the community out of darkness which had previously limited people and caused them to be non-literate, spiritually blind, and economically poor. Joseph, one of the community members, was heard saying, *'If this church hadn't come to us with this process, I could be dead by now through drunkenness. But through its message shared openly with all of us villagers here, I am safe'*.

Since the mobilisation process began, the community feels it has freedom to express its concerns to the church. This gives the church the chance to help the community to find solutions to local needs. In the same way, the church has become transparent to the community, and often meets with the community to share its vision and how it is implementing it.

The work of the church is much more 'owned' by church members than it was

Church and community mobilisation process

The church and community mobilisation process that was used in Shinyanga Diocese is divided into two parts.

PART 1 Mobilising the church

As many church members as possible are brought together to look at what the Bible says about the church's mission. It is important that church members have an opportunity to study the Bible for themselves. The church members are therefore divided into groups and a facilitator asks questions about the Bible passage, which church members answer and discuss within their groups. This method is often more effective at motivating people than if the pastor preached the message in a church service.

The Bible studies enable church members to understand the church's ministry to the community and to develop a vision. The Bible studies also give community members confidence to engage more with the community. Without good relationships, transformation is difficult to achieve.

PART 2 Mobilising the community

The church works with the community to analyse the current situation and develop an action plan for the future. This stage uses participatory techniques and involves:

- describing the current situation in the community
- gathering information about key issues related to daily life
- analysing the information so that a clear decision can be made about the future
- making decisions about how community problems can be addressed, using local resources where possible.



Nick Burn / Tearfund

After being mobilised by the church, this community successfully lobbied the road construction company for a new well when they built a road over the old one.

before, with the guidance of church leaders. Likewise, the development activities in the community are 'owned' by community members under the supervision of their selected development and sectoral committees.

When the entire church became more accountable to the community, the work of the local evangelist and pastor became easier and of greater benefit to both the church and the community. The church leaders also became more active and responsible in their work. If they failed to act responsibly, the community could see them as unfit for the job, and begin to demand that they be removed from the leadership!

When the work of the evangelist and pastor became more manageable, effective and efficient, church members became more motivated to serve God and other people. They performed the tasks, not because the pastor said they should, but because the Bible had shown them that they had a role.

Principles of church accountability to the community

From this experience, we can draw some principles of church accountability to the people it is serving:

- The church can be accountable to the community if it understands its role here on earth through listening to

God through the Bible. A number of relevant Bible passages are given in the box on page 10.

- The church should share its vision with the community. Allow the community to understand and interpret the church vision. It will be difficult for the community to respond to the church if it fails to understand the church's vision. Let the vision of the church motivate the community to desire transformation in their lives.
- The church should be willing to take the lead in facilitating the community to understand its situation. Then the church and the community can jointly identify solutions.
- The church should be open to share and participate in addressing the issues facing the community without accusing people in any way. The church should seek to serve the community with love.

Revd Emmanuel Isaya is Church and Community Mobilisation Process Co-ordinator for Shinyanga Diocese.

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BIBLE STUDY Biblical accountability

Read Ezra 8:28-34

Twelve men were selected by Ezra to carry gold, silver and bronze articles to Jerusalem. The articles were weighed beforehand and accounted for at the time of delivery. They were given instructions: 'You as well as these articles are consecrated ... Guard them carefully until you weigh them out in the chambers of the house of the Lord.' Ezra 8:28-29

Accountability is about being responsible for fulfilling one's duties and obligations. The twelve priests were required to carry out priestly duties, which included protecting temple property. They fasted to seek God's protection for their journey. The journey was long and they were exposed to potential attacks by bandits.

Biblical accountability begins with taking responsibility for one's *own actions* and *making a conscious choice of allowing God and others to help* in accomplishing what is right.

Accountable to God Asking God for protection was a sign of dependence on God and accountability to him. See also Romans 14:12 and Hebrews 4:13.

- *Identify different ways in which you show dependence upon God, especially in challenging circumstances.*

Accountable to self The twelve men were consecrated and there was no place for stealing or deception. By being accountable to their calling they stayed pure in heart. See also Psalm 139:23-24.

- *How does your daily work reflect God's purpose for your life?*

Accountable to others Ezra's men were accountable for protecting the valuables and each other's lives on the journey. Likewise, in 1 Corinthians 12:12-28, Paul describes church members as members of one body, responsible for and accountable to each other.

- *What activities can you introduce in your church for members to experience greater connectedness?*

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Supporting Water Councils in Honduras

by José Vidal Lanza

In Honduras, Water and Sanitation Administrative Councils are set up at community level to manage the community's water system. These Councils report to SANAA, the National Water Service, which is responsible for organising the provision of drinking water services across Honduras. In order for the Councils to be effective, they need to be held accountable by both the community and SANAA.

Accountability of Water Councils

The Council members are elected democratically by the users of the water service. They hold their posts for four years and can be re-elected. On the other hand, their place on the Council can be cancelled at any time if the member fails to carry out their role effectively. The Councils are made up of leaders who are committed to their communities, such as pastors, local leaders, members of community associations and leaders of other organised groups. The fact that the churches are involved gives the Councils greater credibility among the

The training and support that the Councils have received has enabled them to be more transparent



Edwin Urbina / PAG

Members of a Water Council testing water for contamination.

users because the churches are usually respected for being accountable for their activities.

There are written rules and regulations for the Councils which are approved by the community and the municipal government. These authorise the Councils to establish tariffs, to set up connections and suspend them when required, to request expansions to the systems, and to promote the appropriate use of water resources, among other things. The Councils have access to legal advice if they ever need it so they can ensure they fulfil their responsibility to provide a functioning water system.

The Council members are trained by technicians from SANAA or by technicians provided by local organisations. The training includes tariff regulation, the management and maintenance of rural water supplies and the running of Councils. They are also trained in how to carry out a social audit to ensure good and transparent management of resources. Each Council has a book to record meetings as well as a book of daily accounts for recording income and expenditure. An internal audit is carried out regularly.

PAG's involvement

For many years, the organisation Global Village Project (Proyecto Aldea Global – PAG) has designed and implemented water-related projects in the Department of Comayagua. It has supported the

Councils to enable them to be accountable to the water users and SANAA. It has also empowered the community. For example, PAG has provided intensive training to the church leaders and to the Councils. This training was based on training needs identified by the participants. PAG ensured that both men and women took part in the training.

PAG's work has helped communities to organise themselves and ensure the following:

- Efficient provision of drinking water supplies.
- Mechanisms to protect water as a resource and to conserve water.
- Access for the whole community.
- Quality of water.
- Fair tariffs that ensure access to water for everyone and a sustainable supply system.

The training and support that members of the Councils have received has enabled them to be more transparent, and water users find it easier to hold them accountable. Water users can rely on regulations and tariffs that ensure transparency in the use of funds and have a water supply system that is functional, sustainable and accessible to everyone.

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Further strategies needed in favour of female students

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, female schoolchildren face specific schooling issues. Many parents do not approve of training for girls at higher levels. Parents think that girls should just get married rather than get an education. Traditional culture plays a big part in this phenomenon. UNICEF's 'All girls to school' campaign had a noticeable impact on increased numbers of girls at school, especially in lower level primary school classes. At higher levels of education, the number of girls decreases compared to the number of boys. The few girls who do attend at higher levels are very busy with domestic work and household chores after school which puts their studies at risk.

Our not-for-profit organisation has set up out-of-hours study in certain schools. The idea is that students, generally male and female together, learn 'how to learn' and, above all, we try to give the girls a bit of study time.

We require further ideas and strategies to improve this work.

Josias Kamwira, President of the board of PASEDEC

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Working with traditional healers

Although there are many benefits to traditional medicine, some of the practices of traditional healers can be damaging to health or lead to death. The cultural practice of Infant Oral Mutilation (IOM) – pulling out children's healthy milk teeth – is usually carried out by traditional healers in rural communities in many parts of Africa. In some areas, infant deaths following this practice are reported to be second only to malaria as the cause of infant mortality. Dentaïd has plans to establish and implement local, national and international strategies and activities to start combating the practice of IOM. Working positively with traditional healers will be included in this strategy.

If you can share experiences of co-operating with traditional healers to improve health care whilst raising awareness of potential dangerous practices, please contact Nicky Triance at:

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Spiritual care for people living with HIV

Spiritual care is the very first need of people who discover that they are HIV positive. Whether they want to or not, they will have to ask themselves painful questions. Christians often have negative

thoughts, such as doubt about God's unconditional love, rebellion and self-blame. Every person living with HIV that we have talked to has mentioned this black period which fortunately was quickly relieved by their approaching the church or other organisations which are aware of this inevitable reaction. People who are not Christians tend to decide they want revenge, or deny the existence of God and see their own existence on this earth as absurd.

As a result, Vigilance works in the following areas:

- Helping those living with HIV to understand that it is not a curse but a disease for which we need God's help.
- Helping those living with HIV to understand that all humans go through times which are dark. Those who withstand these difficulties are those who seek to solve their problems by putting their trust in God.
- Interceding with and for those living with HIV who are suffering from psychological and physical problems.
- Bringing the good news about Jesus to those living with HIV who are burdened and rejected.
- Helping people living with HIV to discover and fully accept their value as human beings made in the image of a God who loves them.
- Fully involving those living with HIV in the response to HIV and AIDS.

Emmanuel Coulibaly, Vigilance, Burkina Faso
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Hail

A severe hailstorm fell on Kalonge, a village in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo on 24th March which devastated fields, houses, churches and schools.

Do you have any information on how to reduce the damage of this sort of hazard?

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Mobilising the local church - new section of tilz website



At Tearfund we believe that local churches around the world can make a huge contribution to reducing poverty at local, national and international levels due to their passion, permanent presence in the community, commitment to relationships and spiritual hope.

On the tilz website we have launched a brand new section that looks at how local churches can best be equipped for their role in transforming communities. It can be found at <http://tilz.tearfund.org/Churches>.

The section is useful for Christian relief and development organisations, church denominations, Christian NGOs, local church leaders and church members. It contains ideas, principles, examples and resources to help people to mobilise the local church to take action in its community.

Accountability in providing food aid

A pilot project in Zimbabwe

by Karyn Beattie

Tearfund works with a small organisation in Zimbabwe that works with local churches to provide care and support for orphans and vulnerable children. Due to serious food shortages they introduced a food aid programme for the most vulnerable families. This was carried out by local churches.



Maggie Sandilands / Tearfund

Women collecting their food from a distribution site.

Pilot project

As part of Tearfund's commitment to the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership (see page 5), the Zimbabwean organisation was approached to pilot a one-year project that focused on accountability at three sites within their feeding programme. The sites selected included both rural and urban areas.

Starting with a pilot project allows problems to be identified and addressed before the project is implemented across the whole programme of work. It also gives time for staff to fully understand the concept of accountability.

The organisation was keen to carry out this pilot project because accountability mechanisms ensure that people are treated with dignity and that the project has the correct focus.

Challenges

An important part of the pilot project was the time spent at the end learning from the experience. This learning is being used to develop the project in order to improve accountability in the future. Some of the main challenges faced in implementing this pilot project included:

OPPOSITION FROM CHURCH LEADERS

At first, church leaders were suspicious

of the organisation's motivation for this project, and felt that they were not trusted. The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Officer needed to invest considerable time with the pastors, answering questions and explaining the purpose of the pilot project. Support from one of the pastors who understood the benefits of the idea was invaluable. The M&E Officer started the conversations with pastors by offering an apology for not having been more transparent in the past. Most of the pastors now see the value of the accountability project because it takes account of the interests of the people they serve. However, changing attitudes takes time, and some churches remain unwilling to be involved.

THE ORGANISATION'S ROLE As the organisation seeks to empower churches, community members see only the church as the provider of whatever assistance they receive. However, the accountability structure required the organisation's staff to be more actively involved with the community in order to provide a neutral contact point for community members wishing to report on the distributions. An alternative could be to set up accountability committees to oversee the distributions and to provide a channel for feedback. Ideally these committees should include those receiving food, church members and representatives of the wider community.

POLITICAL AUTHORITIES One of the accountability mechanisms was communicating information about the project to stakeholders. The information drew attention from authorities in the urban area, where they attempted to use the food distributions for political gain. In politically-sensitive areas it is important to consider carefully what information is shared. For example, it may not be appropriate to display budgetary information on a notice board. Ways could

An important part of the pilot project was the time spent at the end learning from the experience

be found to target the information at those receiving food, such as only displaying posters while distribution is actually taking place and then taking them down.

INVOLVING CHILDREN Children will often give very clear and honest information. However, in rural areas of Zimbabwe, children are taught that they should not question an adult. Therefore they were very reluctant to give feedback. As Zimbabwe has quite a high literacy rate, children were encouraged to write down their feedback and post it in the box. To get feedback from younger children, children's groups were set up and led by teenagers.

FEEDBACK In spite of high literacy rates, not all children or elderly people are able to write, and telephone lines in Zimbabwe do not always work and are not secure. Feedback is therefore often provided in person to the M&E Officer, but this means

that it is not anonymous. When asking for feedback it is important to ensure that people who speak out are protected. It is also important to check the information received, particularly in politically-sensitive areas, as incorrect information may be given on purpose. Be clear and realistic about what aspects of the programme can and cannot be changed in response to feedback.

Benefits

Results of the pilot project have so far been positive and the accountability mechanisms will soon be used in three other locations. Key benefits have included:

ENSURING GOOD PRACTICE Publishing the criteria for selecting those who would receive food aid uncovered a number of abuses, including a pastor who was taking food for himself even though he did not fit the criteria. Community members pointed this out to the M&E Officer, who challenged the pastor directly. In the words of one of the other pastors from that area, the accountability project '*benefits those who are supposed to be benefiting*'.

Consultations with those receiving food in the urban area resulted in the distribution site being moved to a neutral location rather than using individual churches, to



Maggie Sandilands / Tearfund

A box for written feedback and complaints.

ensure that pastors were not using food to encourage church attendance.

The openness about selection criteria and ration quantities ensures that those receiving food now receive the right amount. Local co-ordinators report that they no longer have to answer so many questions, or face accusations of favouritism or stealing food.

EMPOWERING COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Volunteers, co-ordinators, community members and pastors all recognised that the pilot project restored the dignity of community members. A pastor explained: '*They were made to feel like beggars before because they collected food from the pastor's house. Now they own the project.*' The community members are now able to select distribution sites and manage the food distribution themselves. Many of the volunteers also appreciate this because it means they are no longer required to attend every distribution. The communities involved in this pilot project report that they have valued the opportunity to take control of their distributions, and to have a way to feed back complaints. One community member commented, '*This system is very lovely. We were waiting for this moment.*'

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Accountability to communities in practice

The pilot project was developed using guidelines written by Tearfund for accountability to communities in its operational relief work. The guidelines were adapted to fit the Zimbabwean context. The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Officer implemented the pilot project using the following methods:

- 1 Met with the church leaders and local co-ordinators to introduce and explain the idea of accountability and to ensure their agreement and involvement. The pastors and co-ordinators then explained the project to the volunteers and community members, in the presence of the M&E Officer.
- 2 Developed posters containing information about the project in the local language, which were put up before each monthly food distribution. These informed communities about:
 - how people were selected to receive food aid
 - ration quantities for each person
 - timescale for distributions.
- 3 Encouraged the participation of everyone receiving food, including children.
- 4 Introduced a box for written feedback and complaints. This has been widely welcomed and used by communities.
- 5 Addressed any issues raised and provided regular feedback to the community members.

'Saving for Change' groups

Roles and responsibilities of the group members

by Armel Kabré and Michel Sawadogo

'Saving for Change' is a concept that is being developed in Mali, Senegal and Burkina Faso to enable women to escape from poverty by saving the few financial resources that they have. The aim is to teach them to manage their money sustainably rather than give them a handout. When this is put into practice, the sense of empowerment that develops among women's groups is clear to see. An important part of the concept is enabling group members to keep each other accountable.

A Saving for Change project is being carried out by ACTS-Ministry Burkina Faso with support from Oxfam and the Stromme Foundation. For the savings group to succeed, roles and responsibilities are assigned to the women, whether they are community members or leaders. The group members' responsibilities are as follows:

- To take an active part in meetings, and not to miss them.
- To save. This means setting aside a weekly amount that has been agreed beforehand.
- To help one's neighbour. As very few of the women are literate, they rely on oral communication and their memories, so they always sit in the same position at the meetings. Each member watches over the neighbour on her right and makes sure that she attends the meetings. If the neighbour is not at a meeting, the member will ensure that the neighbour has sent in her weekly savings. The member should know the amount of the loan that her neighbour has taken, the date it should be repaid and the interest due. She is also responsible for visiting her neighbour to see if she is sick or is facing some kind of problem.

As the project involves women who are mainly non-literate, the role played by

each woman is significant. Members are stimulated because they have to account not only for themselves but also for other members of the group. This sense of accountability among the Saving for Change groups is very important for the groups to work well.

As the women carry out their roles and responsibilities, they learn business principles. For example, they need to remember facts and figures and report during meetings on the sums that have been loaned and the interest that is due.

As a result, they realise that they do have value in the community and the ability to make choices about their own future.

The women welcome each other's assistance in keeping the group on track. Within the groups, the women cannot ask the same question that Cain asked before God, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' In front of everyone present, each woman declares that she will help and watch over her neighbour, who is her sister, with the aim of benefiting the group and developing a sense of solidarity.

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A Saving for Change group meeting.

ACTS staff