

Accountability Alert-Sierra Leone



2011 ANNUAL REPORT completed January 2012



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Introduction

The sharing of good practice among Ngos is a very big challenge within the operating NGOs in Sierra Leone; as a result, the relationships between NGOs are weak with co-operation and collaboration limited to only a small number of organizations¹. This is why AASL has been very cautious in trying to rally round other credible NGOs to form the Accountability Working Group to map out strategies to mitigate the effect of not sharing information and good practices.

Accountability Alert-Sierra Leone's (AA SL) operations in Sierra Leone are mainly geared towards improving on service delivery and sharing of best practice. The main aim for its establishment is based on perceptions of inadequate accountability and transparency within the NGO sector, which is charged with delivering a significant range of public services. This has undermined the country's development effort over the years, and action ought to be taken to help reverse the trend.

As a non-partisan, independent NGO, the organization's programing is conceptualized to continue strengthening NGO accountability in keeping with the values and principles of standards of ethics, where citizens in their communities can continue to have the opportunity of influencing decisions and participate in their own development projects.

Our position at AA-SL continue to be that the problems of poor accountability within NGOs and other service delivery institutions can be solved through improved performance, public education and shared information and experience - all based on ethical values and active discouragement of corruption at all levels.

Vision

AA-SL has a vision of a country in which International and National NGOs are perceived to be credible performers, accountable and responsive to the beneficiaries they are sworn to serve, and initiating projects based on the analysis of community-needs; where every citizens enjoy the right to fully participate in the planning and monitoring of projects implemented in their localities for the realization of their social and economic growth.

Mission

AA-SL's mission is to strengthen accountability in the civic sector so that all citizens can have the opportunity to influence decisions and participate in local/national development. We design, develop and implement projects to make accountability work for citizens.

Objectives

AASL's works with partners to fulfill its overall objective in raising the standards of performance and thus develop accountability in the NGO sector. Specifically, we seek to do the following:

1	To generate commitment among NGOs/CSOs to the values and principles of accountability;
2	To ensure that acceptable standards (both national and international) of accountability, performance and service delivery are met by all NGOs/CSOs, regardless of source of funding.
3	To establish effective partnerships and frameworks for action with NGOs and the Anti-Corruption Commission for greater transparency within the development community;
4	To raise public awareness about accountability and involve beneficiaries/citizens in development;
5	To facilitate the adoption and practical application of an NGO Code of Ethics for all NGOs operational in Sierra Leone.

Key AA-SL's Achievements in 2011

AA-SL organized activities in 2011 as follows;

1. AA SL is a founding member of the Accountability Working Group (AWG) launched in March 2011; AA SL acts as a secretariat of the Group and co-ordinates its work;
2. Collaboration with the Anti-Corruption Commission in community sensitization on accountability of service providers in four chiefdoms;
3. Collaboration with YMCA in training local government functionaries in the basic concept and participatory tools of budget monitoring;
4. Launched the Concept of an NGO Open Day to showcase their work and mobilized support for the initiative through a Steering Committee for the NGO Open Day event;
5. Co-ordination of work on the mapping of current practice in NGO accountability launched by AWG in October 2011;
6. Organised M&E training for NGOs
7. Developed knowledge and skills through attendance of capacity building courses in NGO accountability such as HAPS (in Freetown and Monrovia) and advocacy.

Objective 1 – Organization became operational

For any organization to stand the test of time, funding is most critical for its survival. In a sector which is overcrowded with CSOs, NGOs and CBOs, new arrivals must have strong strategy, funding and powers of persuasion in order to survive. AA SL is no exception. It faces challenges on several fronts: in terms of funding, expertise, sector support and programmatic direction. It was with great determination, enthusiasm, understanding of development issues and courage that the founding fathers of AA SL succeeded not only to survive, but develop a programme and reputation over the years.

Key achievements:

- Formed set the Accountability Working Group which now at work
 - Conducted Training in Basic Concept and Participatory Tools of Budget Monitoring in Local Government in Sierra Leone
 - Networks and partnerships explored
 - Media contacts developed
- *Objective 2 – Continued working with civil society and NGO community*

It was important that during 2011 we continued to engage the civic sector and NGO community. Accountable performance in civic sector is beyond the remit of any one organization. It only works if it is practiced across the sector. We used e-mails, media, networking and mostly direct communication through visits and meetings to introduce our organization to the sector. We branched out internationally to develop relationships with like-minded individuals and organizations who shared our values and objectives.



AASL's training workshop for CSOs on monitoring and evaluation

Key achievements:

- AA SL become known among the CSOs and NGOs in the country;
- Continue to established relationships with like-minded organizations on the issue of accountability;

- AA SL established links with ACC in four districts to introduce its work and mobilize support from the communities in holding service providers accountable;
- AA SL participated in EITA workshop, and radio program;
- AA SL established contact with Anti Corruption Commission.
- Successfully carried out training for YMCA in the basic concept and participatory tools for budget monitory in local government.

Objective 3 – Generating commitment amongst NGOs and CSOs to the values, principles and action for improved accountability

1. AA-SL’s most important project in 2011 was the collaboration with the Anti Corruption Commission in organizing a 7day (7th July – 15th July, 2011) national stakeholder consultation on the theme: **“IMPROVING ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY IN SERVICE DELIVERY²”**.
2. And the formation of the Accountability Working Group to carry out mapping exercises for best practices in the NGO sector. Whose purpose is to spearhead the way forward by setting the performance standards, building capacity and developing a learning and information platform for the civic sector?

The project was aimed at strengthening the legitimacy, transparency and accountability of civil society organisations in Sierra Leone. These workshops were organized against the backdrop of concerns raised about accountability and transparency as a serious problem in the development sector. The objectives of the workshop was to generate commitment among NGOs, service providers, Community people to the values and principles of accountable behavior, assess and share experience in practicing accountability, and map out the way forward towards a healthy and responsible third sector.

The recommendations of the workshops from some 400 participants in the workshops and the ACC District Coordinators

Key Achievements

- AA-SL continues to acquire knowledge of the NGO sector. Our knowledge of the Civic Sector in relationship with communities, state institutions, and donors, their internal systems, performance, and accountability have improved;
- We have identified constructive proposals to improve practice, with key ideas prioritized for joint-action:
 - Establishment of a working group on accountability of the NGO sector to spearhead strategies for improvement.

- Organizing an Open Day for NGOs to promote their work provide public information and showcase their work around the country. This is expected to bring closer collaboration for networking.
 - Development of a code of conduct for NGOs which the NGOs themselves feel part of.
 - Mapping out of best practices in Sierra Leone
- AA-SL has facilitated the setting-up of the Accountability Working Group (AWG) initiatives, through a consultative process.
 - AA- SL in collaboration with ACC public education department organized four regional workshops;

Objective 4: Relationship with the ACC in the Regions and Public Awareness Raising Program to Improve service providers accountability to beneficiaries

AA-SL successfully engaged citizens in 4-chiefdoms (see box) of the country between July-September, 2010 on the theme: Chiefdom **Awareness Raising Campaign on NGOs/CBOs/Govt Accountability to beneficiaries in service delivery.**

1. Kambia, Magbema Chiefdom, Northern Province – 27th June, 2011.
2. Zimmi, Makpele chiefdom, Southern Province - July 11, 2011;
3. Mattru, Jong chiefdom, Northern Province-July 13, 2011;
4. Kailahun, Luawa chiefdom, Eastern Province - July 15, 2011;

These campaigns were focused on raising the level of awareness amongst key civic groups (councilors, chiefs, women, youths, and students) on their role in development projects and what it means to be accountable.

The workshops attracted some 400 participants in four chiefdoms. Participants conveyed a sense of frustration with the apparent lack of transparency and accountability in the sector, and debated solutions on the way forward. They were united in their call for greater transparency and ethical standards from service providers, and demanded more community



AASI/ACC workshop on NGOs' accountability at Mattru Jong

participation and involvement in ongoing and future projects implementation. The women representatives demanded information about development projects and support to compete for sub-contracts on projects.

Key Achievements

- *AA-SL established links in four districts to introduce its work and mobilize support;*
- *AA-SL succeeded in mobilizing local women's and youth groups (and their networks) to support their participation in local development projects and build better practices in the future;*
- *AA-SL trained over 400 participants (from 4 communities in 4 chiefdoms) on the issues of accountability and citizen's participation in local development projects. A follow-up training in several more chiefdoms has been proposed.*
- *we identified key strategies that could be used to improve effective development in service delivery;*
- *Key leaderships from amongst civic groups and individuals in the community (women and youths organizations) continued to be identified to help influence local development in their communities;*
- *We secured commitments from citizens in 4 communities (in Zimmi, Kambia, Kailahun and Matru Jong) on how to strengthen their ownership of local development projects in collaboration with ACC;*
- *We established that citizens feel deprived by the development practitioners when they fail to meet the expected needs of the communities they serve;*
- *The four workshops were described (by participants) as timely and relevant.*

Objective 5: Strategic Partnership and Collaboration

Our strategic policy in 2011 and beyond is to build collaborative relationships with like-minded organizations like the ACC and YMCA , CAFOD Vision for the Blind, Peace Links etc in seeking solutions and achieving consensus to improve service delivery for citizens.

AA-SL formed several constructive partnerships during 2011. We continue to be in consultation with credible organizations to develop joint platforms in the promotion of accountability and transparency in the sector.

AA-SL's Management Committee and staff continued to consolidate the existing partnerships and explore the common ground and interest for joint activity. This was also the essential component of the initiative to formulate criteria for membership in the accountability working group as a joint platform for shared knowledge and experience in NGO accountability. Press conferences and radio discussions were organized for the Team to interact with the media and other key stakeholders to highlight the significance of accountability in Sierra Leone and the work to improve services for citizens.

External Partners

A partnership was developed between ACC and AA-SL in July 2011 on the premise of a shared vision of strengthening civil society to achieve the highest possible levels of honesty and openness in order to work effectively for the communities we serve. **AA-SL partnered with ACC Anti Corruption Commission to provide funding of the one week community sensitization workshop, 2011 workshops held in Kambia, Zimmi, Kailahun and Matru Jong.**

Mr. Joseph F. Kamara, ACC Commissioner, and the education outreach officer Mrs. Koloneh Sankoh greatly contributed to the fruitful conduct of the workshops around the provinces.

We highly value our relationship with the ACC District Coordinators who generously shared their experiences and provided professional support during the conduct of the workshop.

National Partners

A consultative approach continued in 2011 to engage on a one-to-one basis with a number of NGOs/CSOs among and several more, all of whom demonstrated some commitment for strategic partnership and future collaboration. The feed-back received to date has being very encouraging.

The national **Anti Corruption Commission (ACC)** has expressed willingness to continue to collaborate and work in joint-areas of interest. Both parties are now about to conclude consultation to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

The most demonstrable form of partnerships united behind the need for greater transparency and accountability in the civic sector remains to be our membership in the Accountability Working Group.



The Media

Our campaign to promote transparency and ethical standards in the NGO sector ensures we maintain strong partnership with the media. We had a robust relationship with the media in 2011, which saw media organizations like Radio Wanjei in Pujehun, Radio Moa in Kailahun, the Radio Kambia helping to spread the message around the communities, and providing the coverage of the issues and getting constituents to listen.

Looking Ahead in 2012

Our knowledge of the sector in Sierra Leone and from meetings with donors and NGOs shows a clear niche for AA-SL to develop systems to operationalize the commitment to accountability. While there is a lot of talk about accountability, and some NGOs and CSOs

are practicing it internally, few are focused solely on governance in the civic sector. Our assessment of the sector has been shared by international Organisation, who sees the urgent need to turn the talk on accountability into practical change on the ground.

AA-SL's activities in 2012 will be shaped around the following;

1. Organizational development, capacity building and development of governance systems;
2. Stewardship and chairmanship of the Accountability Working Group, an alliance of committed NGOs determined to improve standards of performance, build capability and share information and experience across the sector;
3. Campaign and the promotion of transparency and ethical standards through lobbying institutions and the media to spread the message;
4. Research and documentation of current practice in performance and experiences across the NGO sector;
5. Collaboration with like-minded organizations to extend and deepen the practice of ethical and transparent behavior;
6. Network within Sierra Leone and internationally to keep abreast of new developments and share learning;
7. Raise public awareness about accountability and involve beneficiaries in the debate

The Accountability Working Group (AWG) has already been established to map directions and scope of accountability for the sector. This working group had its first meeting in **MARCH 2011**, with several more meetings planned over the course of 2012. A draft code of conduct for the sector, and the documentation of best practices in NGO accountability are part of the outcomes the AWG process will seek to deliver.

The media being a strong advocate will be canvassed to enhance their coverage of these issues and get constituents to listen.

Challenges

The issue of joint initiatives with partners can be more complex than originally thought. The limited resources and expertise, and lack of capacity in the sector have hampered co-operation and free flow of information. While it is understood that change can happen only through joint effort and strength in unity, progress is slow and requires painstaking work and patience.

There is also scarcity of funding for accountability projects. Apparently, there is a consensus to improve governance, but funding to facilitate change and improvement is slow in coming. Membership contributions are the main funding source, a dependency that threatens the

organizations future sustainability. This lack of funding has not helped in the attraction and retention of qualified and experienced personnel.

Conclusion

The organization has had challenges and some good news over the course of 2011. We will continue to work on developing capacity to deliver on credibility and effectiveness on the work that we do.

AA-SL will continue consultations with all stakeholders, advocate for the extension of our sensitization drive around the 149 chiefdoms, speak frankly on the issues, and engage with the donor community, International Non Governmental Organisations and Government to rally their support around this initiative, for if accountability has to be a norm of practice all stakeholders must be a part of the process.

Financial Statement

AA-SL FINANCIAL INFORMATION SUMMARY 2011			
FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR THE PERIOD ENDING JAN 1, 2011 - DEC 31, 2011			
Item No.	Names	Budget (LE)	Budget (USD)
		1 USD = LE 4,500	
INCOME			
Donations	Founders contributions	36,616 ,000	8,136.9
Grant	YMCA	10,226,000	2,272
Cost recovery venture	Training fees	1,356,000	301
Loan	Private	4,500,000	1,000
TOTAL INCOME		52,698,000	11,710.7
EXPENDITURE			
Rent- part payment		6,500,000	1,445
Computers, Accessories & Network		2,200,000	488.9
Office Supplies		858,000	190.7
Internet subscription		2,700,000	600
Telephone bill		2,399,000	533.11
Electricity bill		1,843,000	409.6
Fuel for Vehicle and Generator		7,074,000	1,572
Stationeries		1,589,,000	353.1
Staff Development and Training		1,833,000	407.3
Staff/Volunteer Honorarium		14,400,000	3,200

Project 1: Chiefdom Awareness Raising Campaign (in Luawa Chiefdom, Kailahun, Makpele chiefdom, Pujehun, Jong Chiefdom, Bonthe & Magbema Chiefdom, Kambia) on NGOs/CBOs Govt Accountability in Service delivery to the beneficiaries		2,800,000	622.2
Project 2: Training of CSOs local councilors in budget literacy and monitoring.		6,226,000	1,383.6
Project 3. M& E Training for CSOs/small NGOs		2,276,000	505.8
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		52,698,000	11,710.7
SURPLUS (DEFICIT) FOR 2011		–	–

Note of Explanation: The initiative continues to attract a number of professionals contributing time and expertise on pro bono basis.

Contacts

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