

A Critical Evaluation of a Community Taxpayers Assembly

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CTA Background

- ▶ IGI Kenya believes that to tackle a deep-rooted malaise like corruption in public service, we must start at the grassroots.
- ▶ Unless there's pressure on the ground to push public officials and agencies to act only in public interest, our campaigns and lobbying in cities will bear no fruit
- ▶ It is on this basis that we are enlisting the electorate/local communities themselves to be watchdogs, lobbyists, activists and agents for change

CTA Background

- ▶ We realize that there are few issues so complex, few problems so knotty, that they cannot be tackled and solved by the innate common sense and genius of local people.
- ▶ With the right support, guidance and advice, community groups and organisations have a huge, largely latent, capacity for self-government and self-organisation.
- ▶ This is the hallmark of the CTA initiative: devolved, decentralised, with power diffused throughout our society.

CTA Background

- ▶ A CTA comprises of youth groups, retiree & sports clubs, farmers associations, special interest groups, business lobbies, women/youths groups, local churches or mosques, self-help groups, welfare caucuses, artisans or disability groups, workers unions and cooperative societies.
- ▶ Since most of these groups are already organized along their various themes and have strong local networks coupled with experience in the field, they become the pillars of Community Taxpayers Assemblies in the community

CTA Background

- ▶ Through discussions, campaigns, debates, guest speeches, media broadcasts, publications, expert talks, petitions, co-operatives, mutuels and civic drives owned and run by their own members, investing their time, skills and resources, communities will learn how to better their own world.
- ▶ CTAs typically monitor and audit public revenues, budgets, projects and expenditures at the local level and share such information with the communities and a wider audience through publications, mass media and community information revolution strategy.

CTA Background

- ▶ We believe that the causes of political disengagement and civic apathy while complex, can be distilled to a dominant factor: a sense of powerlessness on the part of most citizens that their voices are not being heard, their views not listened to, their participation unwelcomed or their activity unrewarded.
- ▶ People want to know that if they expend their valuable time and effort, there will be tangible, practical and positive results.

CTA Background

- ▶ We do not think that only an enlightened and altruistic class of political leaders and administrators can deliver what is good for people. Within the local community, we recognise and celebrate the role of individual active citizens, social entrepreneurs, campaigners, volunteers and political activists.
- ▶ Our IGI family is defined and energised by hundreds of thousands of decent people, performing acts of altruism and selflessness, and these people deserve the support and recognition of the larger community.

CTA Objects & Outcomes

- ▶ CTAs generate vibrant local democracy by giving real control over local decisions regarding public resources and public services to a wider pool of active citizens;
- ▶ CTAs open the eyes of citizens about who has power on resource allocations, on whose behalf it is exercised, how it is held to account, and how it can be diffused throughout the communities to enhance inclusivity, participation and empowerment;

CTA Objects & Outcomes

- ▶ CTAs empower communities to shift power, influence and responsibility on public resources away from existing centres of power into the hands of communities and individual citizens.
- ▶ The CTA initiative believes that ordinary people can take difficult decisions and solve complex problems that affect them in their unique situations;

CTA Objects & Outcomes

- ▶ CTAs enhance the capacity of local communities to audit public decisions that affect them, question imposed policies and get acquainted with mechanisms of seeking redress from public officials and authorities;
- ▶ CTAs produce conscientized people to realize that they are the ultimate holders of power, have the right to ask questions on public expenditures, demand answers and take action themselves to improve their communities

CTA Model in Kenya Constitution

- ▶ **Art. 174** The Objects of the devolution of govt are-
 - (a) to promote democratic and accountable exercise of power;
 - (b) to give powers of self-governance to the people and enhance the participation of the people in the exercise of the powers of the state and in making decisions that affect them;
 - (c) to recognize the right of communities to manage their own affairs and to further their development

CTA Model in Kenya Constitution

► **Art. 196 (1)** A County Assembly shall-

(a) Conduct its business in an open manner, and hold its sittings and those of its committees, in public; and

(b) facilitate public participation and involvement in the legislative and other business of the assembly and its committees.

Art. 201 The following principles shall guide all aspects of public finance in the Republic-

(a) there shall be openness and accountability, including public participation in financial matters.

CTA Model in Kenya Constitution

► Fourth Schedule, Part 2:

The functions and powers of the County are-

14. Ensuring and coordinating the participation of communities and locations in governance at the local level and assisting communities and locations to develop the administrative capacity for the effective exercise of the functions and powers and participation in governance at the local level

CTA THREATS & CHALLENGES

- ▶ Citizens who are mostly poor have little personal incentive to attend public meetings' particularly given that they receive no monetary compensation.
- ▶ Effective mobilization requires a multi-pronged effort, sometimes using external actors such as chiefs and village elders whose interest may not rhyme with the goals of the CTA projects.

CTA THREATS & CHALLENGES

- ▶ Some CTA programs such as inspection of infrastructural projects eg road construction in Korogocho require technical experts eg engineers and quantity surveyors. The absence of such expertise poses a major risk for successful implementation of citizen engagement in local civil works programs.
- ▶ Effective participation also requires institutional capacity, trained staff and financial resources. There are costs associated with mobilization, information sharing and continuous feedback. Most CTAs pay money to their monitors to cover airtime, transport and report production.

CTA THREATS & CHALLENGES

- ▶ Crucial project documents like bills of quantity, structural drawings, accounts statements, minutes of tender committee meetings are more often unavailable for public scrutiny, yet they are very useful pieces of evidence for misuse of funds.
- ▶ Citizens quickly become discouraged from participating in CTA activities if they feel that government does not respond to their input.

CTA STRENGTHS & OPPORTUNITIES

- ▶ As with any community initiative, processes of public engagement require an investment of resources.
- ▶ At the same time, these investments should pay off in improved impact of government spending as well as improved citizen satisfaction.

CTA STRENGTHS & OPPORTUNITIES

- ▶ Though county governments do not presently recognize this fact, the constitution anticipates the provision of funds in the county budgets for CTAs and other citizen forums to effectively participate in local governance.
- ▶ Public participation ventures in Kenya such as CTAs have been put into law and thereby guaranteeing freedom of operations and collaboration with government agencies.

CTA STRENGTHS & OPPORTUNITIES

- ▶ Existence of multiple social enterprise groups in most communities in Kenya sets a fertile ground for the sprouting and thriving of CTAs.
- ▶ This is because members are already socialized into pulling resources together, forging joint actions and pursuing a common agenda as a community.

ACTIVE CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARD

- ▶ Empowering citizens and communities is an urgent task for us all. It is important that every government agency has a system of accessible, interactive contact for citizens to raise concerns.
- ▶ Such systems should be developed with clear principles and a proper understanding of what redress or compensation may be available where that is appropriate.
- ▶ Where people just want things put right, they should be kept informed of what has been done following their complaint.

ACTIVE CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARD

- ▶ From 2016, CTAs shall produce the best overall citizen in fostering active and participatory leadership in the community whose achievements shall be celebrated through an annual event presided over by the International Governance Institute Chairman,
- ▶ The Active Citizen of the Year will be given a trophy, a Certificate and other gifts by the IGI Trustees

ACTIVE CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARD

- ▶ CTAs will lobby the government to make it easier to influence public policy at a local level by introducing a new duty for public bodies to respond to petitions satisfactorily and on time.
- ▶ It is about helping citizens to get involved when they want to on their own terms - paving the way for a new style of active citizenship that not only gives people a greater say but ensures that their voices are heard and that their views will make a difference.
- ▶ CTAs are raising the visibility of the overview and scrutiny function in local community governance, which is similar to Select Committees in Parliament. Public officials will become more visible. A key part of the role of a chair or chief executive of a public body should be that they face a regular public hearing. We will consult on a new right to petition to hold local officers to account at public meetings.

ACTIVE CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARD

- ▶ If people are not satisfied with a response to a petition, they could ask for it to be debated further or invite policy makers to the CTA to explain it further.
- ▶ CTAs will work with key inspectorates and oversight bodies to encourage them to ensure petitions are important pieces of evidence to determine when inspections or investigations should be triggered.
- ▶ In view of this project, performance contracting for public officers should include an aspect of how fast and satisfactory they act in response to a citizen petition

ACTIVE CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARD

- ▶ We want to see public services and public servants in tune with, and accountable to, the people they serve.
- ▶ Democracy is not about a cross in a box every five years, but about a way of life. It should flow around us like oxygen.

THANKS!!