PERL Learning from Evidence-Based Results (JULY 2024)

Engaged Citizens Constitituency Influence Story No.7:

Kaduna SLAMs: Strengthening governance in Nigeria through co-created, State-Led Accountability Mechanisms

For over a decade now, the development community has sought to amplify the collective voice of citizens in selected states in Nigeria through 'state-led accountability mechanisms' to promote accountability and advocate for improved delivery and access of basic health and education services, towards achieving SDGs. These mechanisms are multi-stakeholder coalitions comprised of government, professional associations, media, civil society and traditional institutions. In Kaduna, they appear to have taken off in a perfect storm, and look set to continue to shape and sustain the state's development pathway.

International actors such as the World Bank and UK Government have been promoting 'accountability' as part of broader public sector reforms in developing countries for at least the past two decades. In 2011, accountability and transparency came to the forefront of the discourse on improving maternal and newborn health. Following the UN Secretary-General's launch of the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health in 2010, the international Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's & Children's Health urged countries worldwide to institute national accountability mechanisms to improve health.

Nigeria, endorsing the UN strategy, embarked on national and state-level plans to address its health crisis. In 2012, the country established the Nigeria Independent Accountability Mechanism (NIAM) to bring civil society actors and government into dialogue on maternal and child health. In parallel, state-level platforms aimed at strengthening citizens' say in health service delivery were strengthened or created. Similar platforms emerged in other sectors too.

Some of these have evolved into large civil society coalitions working independently but in dialogue with the government while some are co-created between citizens and government. Others, such as in Nigeria's Kaduna state, morphed into entities akin to the NIAM in that they are led by citizens but co-created and have government approval and recognition, gaining them the designation of being 'state-led'.

UK Support in Northern Nigeria

For over 15 years, the UK-funded Partnership to Engage, Reform and Learn (PERL) and its predecessor programmes have been supporting the establishment and strengthening of government-citizen platforms in FCDO's focal states in Nigeria – primarily now Kaduna, Kano and Jigawa. These 'social accountability mechanisms' facilitate dialogue and generate evidence to monitor government performance, particularly around budget implementation. They also influence government policies, plans, and budgets development processes through use of evidence. They have made significant strides in enhancing service delivery in health, education and other sectors.

While many are well established, concerns over their sustainability linger. Uncertainties exist regarding future donor support. But perhaps more importantly, the mechanisms remain vulnerable to political shifts. Could election-related changes, for example, lead to weakened efficacy when less-than-enthusiastic administrations come to power? In Kaduna State, the recent gubernatorial election brought such questions to light.

New Administration, Same Policies?

Kaduna State's Governor Uba Sani ran his 2023 campaign on a 'Sustain' manifesto. The manifesto committed the government to continued engagement with citizens, upholding the legacy of Sani's reform-minded predecessor Nasir el-Rufai. But as one civil society leader in Kaduna noted *"it's one thing for a pronouncement to be made and another thing for it to happen"*.[i] The question is whether policies championed under Nasir el-Rufai to open up government to citizens receive the same level of backing by his successor.

Despite an uncertain first year in office – a legal challenge to Sani's March 2023 election victory by the opposition was only dismissed by Nigeria's Supreme Court in January 2024 – there are early indications that he intends to fulfil his campaign commitments.[ii] Most notably, a new open government partnership (OGP) state action plan (SAP III) has been crafted by his administration in collaboration with civil society, outlining specific government pledges on transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement. And accountability initiatives such as the 'Eyes and Ears' public expenditure tracking system remain active particularly the citizens feedback app and the toll-free lines.

Kaduna Leading the Way

Sani's desire to maintain much of his predecessor's legacy is not surprising, not only because of their political links but also because Kaduna State has emerged as a pioneer in transparent, accountable, and responsive governance within Nigeria. The state was the first in Nigeria to join the OGP in 2017, an international effort in which representatives or reformers from government and civil society work together to make governments more open, responsive, and inclusive of their constituents.

When it joined the OGP in 2017, Kaduna was able to build on foundations established over the preceding decade, including government-citizen dialogue platforms that had been supported by donor programmes such as PERL. One of these platforms was a coalition of civil society and media advocating for improvements in maternal, newborn and child health (MNCH), supported by PERL's forerunner, the State Accountability and Voice Initiative, from 2009 to 2016, in partnership with FCDO funded health sector support programmes. In 2015, one of these other programmes, MNCH2, helped the state government and civil society in Kaduna to 'co-

create' a health-focused platform that brought in members of the MNCH advocacy platform. The platform underwent a further transformation in 2017 as Kaduna signed up to the OGP, evolving into the Kaduna MNCH Accountability Mechanism (KADMAM).

KADMAM is a 'state-led accountability mechanism' (SLAM), with two co-chairs, one from government and one from civil society. Its broad membership includes representatives from government, religious and traditional institutions, professional bodies, the media, Community Based Organisation (CBOs), and civil society organisations (CSOs).

With a vision of 'a state free of maternal and child death,' the platform advocates for effective and efficient implementation of health sector policies and programmes to improve health care across the state. It feeds directly into an OGP commitment area on service delivery.

KADMAM's advocacy efforts have contributed to tangible improvements in the health sector, reflected in increased budget allocations, upgraded of health facilities, improved staffing and more. Although it is not possible to attribute improved health outcome to citizen engagement alone, these efforts, including as part of broader governance reform initiatives, have undoubtedly contributed to some positive trends. Between 2016 and 2021, for instance, Kaduna saw increases in the percentage of pregnant women attended by skilled health workers (from 76.1% to 85.3%) and in children receiving basic vaccinations (from 23.1% to 34.5%), in both cases outperforming North-West regional averages.[iii]

Emulating the Health Platform

In 2018, PERL initiated the establishment of the Kaduna Basic Education Accountability Mechanism (KADBEAM). The mechanism mirrors KADMAM's structure, with government and civil society co-chairs, wide membership, and direct links to the OGP

KADBEAM has quickly established itself as a force in Kaduna's education sector. Through its annual scorecards, the platform monitors school projects statewide, leveraging its network of local partners to conduct assessments of essential facilities like toilets, water access, and safety measures. In 2021, KADBEAM's findings revealed alarming deficiencies in school infrastructure, prompting the Kaduna state and local governments to allocate over 4.8 billion Naira (2.4 million GBP) for school water, sanitation and toilet facilities. To this end, PERL provided a platform by which KADBEAM was able to share these findings with its Local Government counterparts (KADLGAM and KADMAM, see below) and jointly present their findings to Kaduna State House of Assembly during a public hearing on the State Budget.

Box 1: The growing influence of KADBEAM in Kaduna

This coalition has facilitated citizens influence in the formulation and implementation of education policies in Kaduna State, including the 'Second Chance Education' initiative. This initiative aims to give access to beneficiaries who missed out on regular education due to circumstances like early marriage, loss of family support, etc. Through the mechanism, partners have collectively expanded opportunities for access to quality education for all as envisaged by SGD 4. According to the Secretary of KADBEAM, Gloria Bulus, *"Through this Mechanism, we have been able to accelerate the implementation of education policies like second chance initiative and remote learning."*

[see corresponding **Human Angle Story No.7**]

Linking local communities to the state

In 2019, a somewhat different mechanism was established with support from PERL - the Kaduna Local Government Accountability Mechanism (KADLGAM). KADLGAM represents a significant step towards enhancing accountability at the grassroots level. In Kaduna, as in most states across Nigeria, the role of Local Government in delivering public services is mostly forgotten, but they are the closest arm of government to the citizens. [See **Story 5 – Local Government: The final frontier in pursuit of better grassroots services in Nigeria].**

KADLGAM is made up of 23 local government accountability mechanisms in each of Kaduna's Local Government Areas (LGAs), which all feed into the state-level structure. Like KADMAM and KADBEAM the mechanism has links directly with state-level ministries, but unlike these two it operates with a geo-political instead of a sectoral focus.

KADLGAM has strong ties to communities. Its 23 local accountability mechanisms are encouraged to engage with even more local development committees to gather citizens' concerns on health and other development issues. KADLGAM has also initiated the 'Community Development Charter Scorecard'. Community development charters are prioritised lists of community needs, created by community members and submitted to government for inclusion in local and state budgets. The scorecard ranks Local Government Areas (LGAs) on the community development charters' influence and execution as a way to encourage peer competition and improve responsiveness to the needs presented in the charters.

By engaging directly at the community level and with every local government across the state, KADLGAM is a bedrock for all the other social accountability platforms in Kaduna, allowing for equitable geo-political representation in the state's governance processes.

Its multi-sectoral, grassroots level role and membership helps minimise competition among CSOs, enhancing their collective effectiveness and strengthening their responsiveness to citizens. Because it helps foster a better relationship between CSOs and citizens at the grassroots and constituency level, KADLGAM not only reinforces state accountability to CSOs, but also CSO accountability to citizens. This dual accountability function, from state to civil society and from civil society to citizens, is key for improving service delivery. This is a model worthy of replication and scale-up in other states, but the conditions for this would need to be conducive, and in Nigeria no two states are the same.

To Every State Its Own Model

Kaduna's accountability platforms have been proliferating. There are platforms focused on social protection, budgets, tax justice, disabilities, and women's participation in politics. From refurbished health centres to school ramps for children with disabilities, Kaduna has shown that state-led accountability mechanisms can catalyse change where there is political commitment to open government and capacity and momentum for reform.

In other states where PERL has worked, social accountability mechanisms have taken different forms. Each state's context – including its level of civil society development, donor engagement, reform opportunities, and social dynamics – has influenced the nature and constitution of these mechanisms.

For instance, while in Kaduna accountability structures were co-created with the state, in Jigawa and Yobe, similar mechanisms were initiated by citizens who then built a working relationship with government. In fact, Yobe is not part of the OGP at all and has no state-led accountability mechanisms but compensates with a highly functional state-wide civil society network that drives public accountability. In Kano, on the other hand, the OGP has taken hold to some extent, and the state has been adopting different elements of accountability structures from Kaduna and Jigawa to fit its own state needs and characteristics.

These various arrangements have their respective strengths and weaknesses. While the structures in Jigawa and Yobe are susceptible to periodic changes in civil society leadership, for instance, those in Kaduna face uncertainty during periods of government transition. As such, PERL has taken up opportunities to firmly establish these structures as and when they arise in each state but is mindful of the challenges to sustainability that each route poses.

What next for Kaduna?

Indeed, questions linger regarding the sustainability of Kaduna's state-led accountability mechanisms, in particular beyond the next three years of Governor Sani's administration. These platforms have clear strengths, including broad networks, often locally, and, for the better-established, have strong reputations as effective agents of change. They have also, thus far, been able to avoid some of the pitfalls besetting similar state-led mechanisms in Kano and Jigawa, where personal competition and political capture by both civil society and government elite, mainly for control of donor resources, has led to their fracturing and unsustainability. Kaduna's secret may be its platforms' integration into a broader set of state OGP structures that hold them accountable to each other, as well as to state citizens and the government. Still, deeper institutionalisation, through policy or legislation, may be needed for long-term viability, to fully eliminate any reliance on the goodwill of reform-

minded individuals leading the way for these platforms to endure.

For now, enthusiasm for state-led accountability mechanisms in Kaduna remains high. Either side of the 2023 elections, two new mechanisms were established, namely the Civil Society-Legislative Engagement Platform and the Open Gov Youth Innovation Hub. And in early 2024, Kaduna State Ministry of Environment took steps to begin the establishment of a new mechanism for the environment sector, to emulate the work of platforms like KADMAM, KADBEAM and KADLGAM.

Meanwhile, these three platforms continue to flourish, being leveraged by FCDO health and education sector support programmes to benefit from their state-wide networks and well-established relationships with government. Their members fears that political transition might erode the strength of supporting state OGP structures have also been allayed, by the almost seamless renewal of the institutional hosting and co-chairing arrangements by the new administration and the Governor signing off on a third OGP state action plan (SAP3). Interestingly, this was accompanied by an 'intergenerational transition', with several elderly co-chairs being replaced by members of the new Open Gov Youth Innovation Hub more than half their age – another positive step to enhance their dynamism and longevity.

Thirteen years since the UN's Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health advocated for greater use of 'social accountability mechanisms' in health, international initiatives such as 'Every Woman, Every Child' continue to urge their use. How to ensure the longevity of these mechanisms remains a question not just in Kaduna but across Nigeria and beyond. The expanding body of research on social accountability may shed some light, and Kaduna may offer useful lessons.

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[i] *Author's interview with Gloria Bulus, Secretary of KADBEAM, in February 2024*

[ii] *https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/action-plan-kaduna-state-nigeria-2024-2025/*

[iii] *Source: UNICEF Multi Indicator Cluster Survey MICS 2016-17 and 2021*