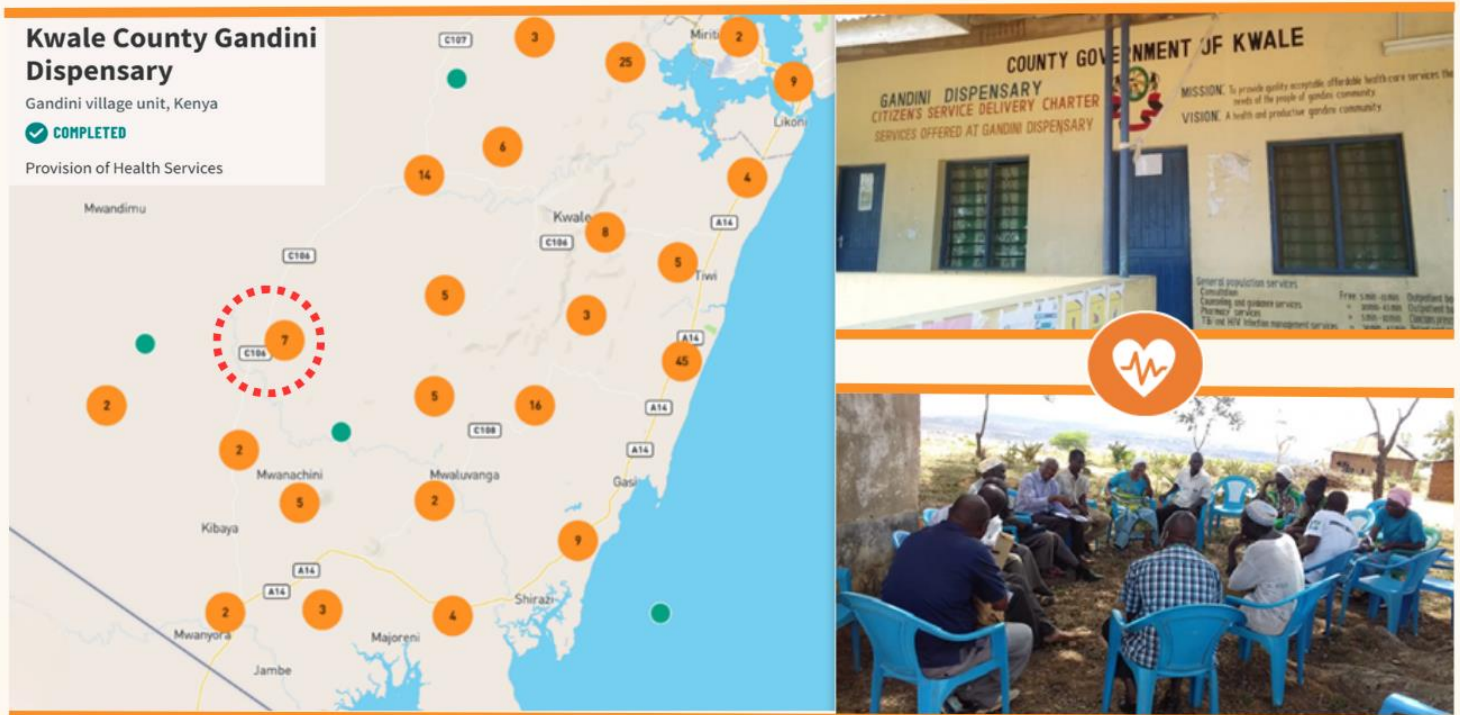# MID-TERM EVALUATION OF INTEGRITY ACTION'S SIDA GRANT

Summary Report

March 2023

Cover images: (Left) Screenshot of VOICE programme coverage on DevCheck;
(Top right) Image of Kwale County Gandini Dispensary
(Bottom right) Monitors engaging on issues at Gandini Dispensary

OVERVIEW

This report summarises findings from an external evaluation of the grant being provided by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) to Integrity Action over the period 2020-2024. This grant supports implementation of Integrity Action's organisational strategy, which is set for the period 2018-23. The evaluation was conducted by Southern Hemisphere.

The strategy aims to position Integrity Action "at the forefront of demonstrating the transformational value of citizen-centred accountability (CCA) to sustainable development". This is to be achieved through work in three areas:

- results for citizens that maximise quality, durability, and inclusivity (*Achieve*)
- collaborate to amplify results, fuel further innovation, and embed CCA (*Amplify*)
- build a robust case for CCA to inspire its mainstreaming (*Convince*)

The evaluation was conducted between November 2022 and March 2023 with an aim to assess Integrity Action's progress towards its strategic objectives, identify implementation strengths and challenges, and incorporate key learnings as part of Integrity Action's adaptive strategy approach. Specifically, the evaluation was tasked to respond to the following key questions:

1. What progress has Integrity Action made towards its strategic objectives?
2. How has Integrity Action's work contributed to this progress? In particular, what is the role of its programming, and what is the role of its broader promotion of CCA methodology and research?
3. How relevant is Integrity Action's strategy to the needs of its target groups?
4. What is the value of Integrity Action according to others in the field?

Additional details can be found in the full evaluation report on Integrity Action's website.

How was it done?

Following a theory-based, participatory approach, the evaluation methodology included reviewing key programme documents and conducting a total of 36 interviews with representatives from Integrity Action and its partner organisations, monitors and local government officials in Kenya and Ghana, and key global actors in the social accountability field. A sense-making workshop was also conducted with some interview participants. Aspects of the outcome harvesting approach were used to retrospectively identify emergent outcomes and establish Integrity Action's contribution. In addition, two case studies on Integrity Action's partnership work in Kenya and Ghana were produced and can be found in the full report.

KEY FINDINGS

The evaluation found that Integrity Action has made impressive progress in achieving its strategic objectives over the period 2020–2024. Findings have been summarised in this document in four areas.

1. Integrity Action's partnership work is achieving results for citizens in target countries

The organisation's flagship metric, the 'fix rate' – the proportion of problems identified that have been addressed or solved to the satisfaction of the community and monitors – stands at 77% across all supported projects over the grant period. This is well above the target of 50%. Additional partnership objectives – including capacitating citizen monitors, building trust across groups, and creating effective engagement platforms – are all materialising. Projects are increasingly inclusive, with increased participation of women and people with disabilities.

> "Schools became more inclusive, so we could see students ensuring that the construction of classrooms were big enough to accommodate students with wheelchairs for example. We also ensured people with disabilities had leadership roles."
> ~ Partner organisation

> "…before, people thought this was a county project, so accepted it the way it was. It felt like it was a favour. Now we know that it's our right, so we ask for accountability."
> ~ Monitor

The evaluation found that Integrity Action's model of social accountability continues to provide positive outcomes for citizens, duty-bearers, and good governance in target countries. There is evidence of monitors increasing their knowledge and skills, community members becoming more aware of their rights and, overall, citizens becoming more confident to play an active role in the planning and implementation of infrastructure projects in their communities.

Live data collected through accessible platforms and shared via effective communication channels (including DevelopmentCheck, but also WhatsApp and regular meetings) has contributed to building trust and effective working relationships between monitors and local government officials.

There is evidence that these mechanisms have led to more transparent, accountable, and responsive authorities and infrastructure delivery in target communities.

> "…It has improved contract management and value for money, preventing possible renovation works few months after contract has ended." ~ Government official

Integrity Action is successfully using a multipronged approach to amplify results and embed citizen-centred accountability globally

While Integrity Action's work traditionally focuses on local project-level, there are signs that the organisation is exploring new ways of expanding its reach in-country for the benefits of more citizens. For example, both the VOICE project in Kenya, and the M4FS project in Ghana have involved an element of engagement with the national government for improved service delivery and to address specific bottlenecks. Interviews with local partner organisations and field-builders for this evaluation confirmed a need to prioritise this multipronged approach even further.

Integrity Action has made good progress in consolidating its position as a thought leader, and is influencing more organisations to integrate elements of social accountability and public participation in their work. Integrity Action uses research, learning and development as a key strategic mechanism for this purpose. Amplifying results is done by, for example, commissioning research to explore specific research questions that may come up during in-country project implementation. This type of work positions Integrity Action as a 'go-to' organisation in the field, as confirmed by representatives of sector organisations interviewed for the evaluation.

In addition, the merger with Crown Agents holds the promise to substantially scale-up Integrity Action's impact and trial a new mainstreaming approach through the spectrum of development interventions.

Integrity Action's strategy is fit for purpose to meet the needs of citizens in partner countries, and of partners globally

Advancing the needs and priorities of citizens is central to Integrity Action's five-year strategy. Integrity Action's approach is based on transferring power to normal citizens. Evaluation participants in Ghana and Kenya confirmed that the approach is relevant to their needs and supports the amplification of citizen voices in local development processes. Integrity Action actively seeks to understand the needs and priorities of citizens in target countries, which it does through in-country consultations with partners and the wider community. The use of context analysis, baseline, and stakeholder mapping studies, and even the benefits of having a funded co-creation period, have all contributed to the success of the projects.

Nurturing partners is key to the success of Integrity Action's model

Continuous engagement with partners facilitates an ongoing review of Integrity Action's collaborative work, and creates opportunities for troubleshooting and feeding learning back into its strategy.

> "I cannot think of any challenge regarding the partnership with Integrity Action.
> In my ten-year experience, I cannot think of any partnership that has been so smooth
> (also due to the various approaches for correspondence and how available
> Integrity Action has been for technical support). Integrity Action has never
> behaved like the one that wields the purse. We have had a very great
> relationship with them and have always had consensus in making decisions."
> ~ *Partner organisation representative*

How Integrity Action values partnerships	The importance of selecting the right partners
Co-creation and co-leadership: Integrity Action's in-country partners play a key role in strategy and programme design	**Partner selection practice:**
	o Partnerships are either opportunity-led or based on past working experience
Organisational learning for adaptive management: Integrity Action actively seeks partners' input, through tools such as surveys, monthly meetings, steering group meetings, and informal consultations, to ensure its strategy remains relevant and effective	o Integrity Action selects organisations in response to funders' geographic priorities
	o Organisations often approach Integrity Action for partnering
	o The selection process ensures joint added value and alignment with Integrity Action's Theory of Change
Seeking input from global peers: CSO peers and funders in the transparency, participation and accountability field are also engaged in Integrity Action's strategy and programme design processes	**New partnership trend:** Integrity Action is exploring organisations with larger footprints in-country

2. Integrity Action is convincing like-minded organisations to mainstream citizen-centred accountability

Organisations operating in the fields of social accountability and open government recognise Integrity Action as influencing their thinking and practice. For example, both Open Government Partnership (OGP) and Hewlett Foundation's Transparency Participation and Accountability organisational strategies have included Integrity Action's input on explicit references to the critical role of social

accountability. Integrity Action staff reported other examples of the organisation's influencing capacity, such as sitting on a collaborative platform with Ukraine's government, civil society and international development actors to plan post-war reconstruction efforts in line with social accountability and transparency principles.
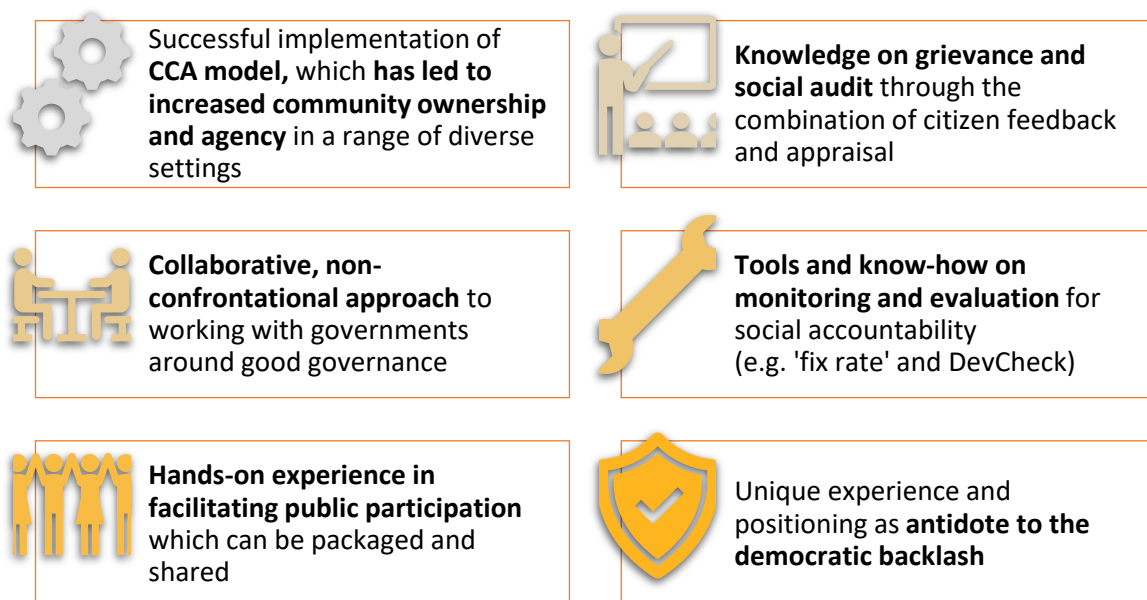
Integrity Action's involvement with other key players in the field of social accountability (such as the OGP) holds the potential for learning how citizen monitoring methodologies can be successfully applied in contexts of conflict and reconstruction. The evaluation also confirms the active role Integrity Action plays in pushing forward the localisation agenda. An example of this includes the organisation's repeated participation in Bond's Future Dialogues initiative, which explores new trends in the international development sector.

> "It's not the tech, or the citizen empowerment…
> but it's the integrity and relationships with their organisations,
> and their trajectory to devolve… it's an outstanding feature."
> ~ *Social accountability sector organisation representative*

Despite funding restrictions, Integrity Action's efforts to scale and mainstream its model have been strengthened and are being recognised with increased interest and collaboration requests.

3. Integrity Action is making a positive contribution to the fields of social accountability and open government

Although parts of Integrity Action's methodology can be found in approaches used by other organisations operating in the fields of social accountability, open government, and civic technology, the organisation's model and tools are packaged in a unique way. The elements of Integrity Action's model that are making a unique contribution to the field are listed in the following diagram.

Successful implementation of **CCA model,** which **has led to increased community ownership and agency** in a range of diverse settings	**Knowledge on grievance and social audit** through the combination of citizen feedback and appraisal
Collaborative, non-confrontational approach to working with governments around good governance	**Tools and know-how on monitoring and evaluation** for social accountability (e.g. 'fix rate' and DevCheck)
Hands-on experience in facilitating public participation which can be packaged and shared	Unique experience and positioning as **antidote to the democratic backlash**

4. Organisational sustainability and how to remain relevant in the development sector

The evaluation found that Integrity Action has been intentional about putting in place sustainability mechanisms at both institutional and project partner level.

Localisation of development cooperation is a [current trend](#) in international development. The localisation agenda means that donors try to organise their development funding to support bottom-up development in partner countries, as opposed to top-down from headquarters in donor capitals.

The evaluation found that this trend aligns well with Integrity Action's model, and that the organisation actively supports this agenda. As a UK-based organisation, the challenge for Integrity Action lies in finding a role that allows it to support this agenda while continuing to justify its existence. This could be achieved in the following ways:

- Acting as a knowledge broker to provide a 'connective tissue' between local and global actors in the accountability field. This would involve producing learning from its projects and sharing this among the wide audience of groups and networks at which it has a seat, such as the OGP.

- Acting as an intermediary to enable localised funding and help donor organisations address the challenges of funding smaller organisations. Through having the right risk profile, being able to absorb funds, and lending legitimacy to partner organisations, Integrity Action could here provide a 'connective tissue' between global donors and southern-based CSOs.

The integration into Crown Agents is one of the key ways in which the organisation is working towards building resilience and sustainable growth.

To ensure the sustainability of its work at the partner level, Integrity Action has invested in facilitating the institutionalisation of its tools, approaches, and systems within partner organisations. Findings show that post-funding, there is a high likelihood that partner organisations will continue supporting citizen monitoring activities.

> "We are not doing it [monitoring] because of the monthly stipend we get, we are doing it for the sake of the community, to make sure quality projects are delivered to the community. We are already volunteers so we will continue to work to ensure that the right thing is done for any project in our community."
> ~ Monitor

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following lists key practices of Integrity Action's existing strategy that, if further strengthened, have the potential to maximise its organisational success.

Progressing towards *Achieve* by the following:

- Explore sustainable and open access tech, including changes to DevCheck, to expand the reach and use of digital tools and methodologies for citizen-led accountability and community monitoring.

- Strengthen local civil society partners with varied approaches and methodologies that can support their in-country collaborative and advocacy efforts. This could include participatory learning tools, gender analysis skills, youth mobilisation and engagement techniques, policy cycles, budgeting and budget monitoring, or coalition building.

Progressing towards *Amplify* by the following:

- Assume a thought leadership role, and share research and learning in various international forums and across global networks to expand awareness and knowledge of these contributions.

- Strengthen the organisation's role of advocate and amplifier, through active participation at relevant forums such as the ongoing renewal of OGP's strategy.

- Explore new ways of deepening engagement with a wider range of in-country actors for systemic impact, such as:
  - Earlier and more intentional engagement with authorities at national and regional levels
  - Using the 'win-win' nature of citizen-centred accountability as a strong entry point to these engagements, e.g. supporting duty-bearers to view, analyse and respond to citizen feedback, and to understand the economic and electoral benefits of so doing
  - Recognising frontline and local duty-bearers also as rights-holders, and supporting them to navigate governmental hierarchies and hold higher authorities to account
  - Identifying, engaging, and building connections among existing pro-accountability actors at all levels, including official oversight bodies (such as ombudsmen), civil society actors and networks of citizens.

Progressing towards *Convince* by the following:

- Purposefully consider its desired role as a 'connective tissue' between donors and southern-based local organisations, including exploring the implications of acting as an intermediary, incubator or accelerator.
- Advocate from the *Inside* by embedding the organisation's methodology in larger projects and/or organisations.
- Document and share lessons learned in adapting social accountability approaches to different contexts, especially fragile states or countries with a closing civic space.

Please see the full report for further detail on the evaluation's findings.