Mid-term Evaluation of Integrity Action's Sida Grant:

Final Report

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Executive summary

Integrity Action contracted Southern Hemisphere to conduct the mid-term evaluation of their Sida grant, which was funded to implement Integrity Action's organisational strategy over the period 2020 - 2024. Integrity Action's 2018 - 2023 strategic objectives are the following:

"By 2023, Integrity Action will be at the forefront of demonstrating the transformational value of citizen-centred accountability (CCA) to sustainable development.

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

The objectives of this mid-term evaluation were to assess Integrity Action's progress towards its strategic objectives, identify implementation strengths and challenges as well as incorporate key learnings as part of its adaptive strategy approach. The four core evaluation questions were therefore unpacked through a looking back, looking around, and looking forward reflection technique.

This evaluation followed a theory-based, participatory approach, which focused primarily on qualitative data collected through key informant interviews (KIIs), semi-structured interviews (SSIs), group interviews, and a sense-making workshop with key stakeholders. Aspects of the outcome harvesting approach were also used to help to retrospectively identify emergent outcomes and establish Integrity Action's contribution. In addition, two case studies on Kenya and Ghana were produced, which enabled the evaluation team to zoom into specific outcomes, interventions, and the pathways between them.

This mix of approaches allowed the evaluation team to assess the programme's global reach while honing into critical examples of work which were selected based on geographic, thematic, or programmatic relevance in an efficient manner.

Key findings

Evaluation question 1: What progress has Integrity Action made towards its strategic objectives, and to what extent is Integrity Action on course to achieve them by September 2024?

Achieve:

The first strategic objective is related to the effectiveness of projects at local level and states. The fix rate stands at 77% across all supported projects over the grant period. It was particularly high in addressing problems of delays in projects (81,2%) and not enough resources and capacities (79,7%), while it is lower on the lack of information to communities (71,3%). Project partners have other project objectives beyond the fix rate, including awareness-raising training of duty bearers and project management committee members, training of integrity values to youth, trust building between citizens and duty bearers etc. All the partner organisations interviewed, reported that they have met all or most of their objectives.

Enabling the most marginalised citizens (women and people with disabilities (PWD)) to act as monitors and benefit from monitoring is a cross cutting priority of Integrity Action. Integrity Action has seen levels of inclusion rise among monitoring groups with currently a slightly higher proportion of female monitors (50.4% –- 300 females out of 595 monitors), which exceeds the target of 50%. There is a high proportion of monitors with disabilities, which demonstrate that Integrity Action's methodologies are accessible for them. A high number of identified projects also address construction barriers for PWD to access schools.

Amplify:

The achievement of Amplify had been challenged by Integrity Action being a small team and the changes in the funding climate. However, by being adaptive and by focusing on partnerships Integrity Action have been able to take certain initiative to scale. Integrity Action has enhanced the accessibility of monitoring data, and thereby generated insights valuable to duty-bearers, civil society and the accountability sector which has contributed to amplifying their impact and expanding uptake of citizen-led approaches. Partner organisations and duty bearers would continue to embed and apply parts of the approaches once projects had finished.

As an example of being a learning organisation and shifting its thinking, Integrity Action abandoned the view that Development Check (DevCheck) is the only answer when it comes to applying technology in its approach. The organisation now focuses on the role of technology rather than the role of DevCheck in underpinning its methodology. Deep listening and reflection with partner organisations about technology have resulted in Integrity Action supporting organisations such as Kwale Youth Governance and Consortium (KYGC) in Kenya in transitioning its monitoring to Kobo to ensure sustained use.

Convince:

The third strategic objective implies uptake of CCA by other stakeholders. The evaluation found that Integrity Action was considered a thought leader within the field of CCA. This is evidenced by the request for Integrity Action to partake in dialogues and speak at conferences and other relevant global events, e.g., Open Government Partnership (OGP) local government working groups. Furthermore, its research and knowledge has been quoted by field builders interviewed for this evaluation who consistently involve Integrity Action in strategic debates about the future of CCA, the importance of public participation and approaches to successfully localising development work. This is mainly because of Integrity Action's learning being practical and built on experiences of citizens themselves. Recommendations are tangible, which is appreciated in the immediate transparency and accountability and wider development sector.

While the initial localisation debate was challenging for Integrity Action (being based in the UK and far from implementation), it encouraged it to reflect on the value add it brings, besides methodologies and tools. This reflection led to an expansion in research and learning.

Integrity Action has also built coalitions such as the coalition with Twaweza in Tanzania and budget coalition in Nigeria, where stakeholders have come together to refine thinking about social contracting and how citizen accountability belongs. This led to the research paper, *From Social Contract to Social Compact*, which was published by the Transparency and Accountability Initiative (TAI) and shared and commented on by many relevant stakeholders.

Another example of the achievement of the *Convince* strategic objective is the use in Nepal of the developed Integrity Action and Campaign for Human Rights and Social Transformation (CAHURAST) reference book and scorecard. Through demonstrating achievements and building evidence, Integrity Action has created a lot of enthusiasm about its approach. The merger with Crown Agent is also an indication of Integrity Action's ability to *Convince*.

Evaluation question 2: What relationships exist between progress achieved and activities carried out by Integrity Action? In particular, what contributions towards strategic progress have been made by:

(a) "in-country added value", i.e. results achieved through Integrity Action's programmes and partnerships in specific countries;

(b) "global added value", i.e. results achieved on a wider scale than "in-country added value", such as through promotion of Integrity Action's methodology and research?

Integrity Action is achieving intended outcomes in-country:

Monitoring and evaluation data confirm that Integrity Action's partnership work has brought great value to the countries, specifically sub-national regions where projects have been implemented. The model has proven effective in creating change in both Integrity Action's supply and demand side of the value chain, with changes at both the citizen and institution level. Citizen-level changes highlighted by evaluation participants (including monitors) have gained knowledge, confidence, and motivation; citizens have a new awareness about their rights and co-ownership of the development process; and an emphasis on the inclusion of women and PWD translated into tangible benefits. Institutional level changes include an openness and shared ownership through positive and negative incentives; monitoring data is used to oversee contractors, write reports and to report on progress at official meetings; assisting the management of construction contracts more effectively by inculcating a 'payment-for-results' ethos in the way local authorities manage projects; and an increased responsiveness and improved local governance.

Integrity Action's global work:

This review confirmed that Integrity Action has made great strides towards achieving its 2018–2023 strategic objectives of *Amplify* and *Convince*, despite the difficult funding climate experienced over the period. The merger with Crown Agents is possibly the most notable effort in this regard. 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 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 the request to address specific bottlenecks. Existing efforts to take the model to scale have already been designed in new projects; for example, in the partnership initiated with the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and the Public Affairs Research Institute (PARI) in 2022, to enhance public participation and improve planning oversight of public service delivery across the country.

Aligned to *Amplify* is Integrity Action's commitment to using research, learning and development as a key strategic mechanism. Amplifying results is done, for example, by commissioning research to explore how to respond to a specific research question that may come up during in-country project

implementation but may require more investigation. This type of work positions Integrity Action as a thought-leader and 'go-to' organisation in the field.

The active dissemination of knowledge produced is part of *Convince*. The evaluation found evidence of this; for example, both OGP and Hewlett Foundation's transparency, participation, and accountability (TPA) organisational strategies have included Integrity Action input on explicit references to the critical role of social accountability.

Lastly, the evaluation confirms the active role Integrity Action plays in pushing the localisation agenda forward. Examples of this include the organisation's repeated participation in Bond's Future Dialogues initiative, which explores new trends in the international development sector, as well as their post-war reconstruction collaboration project with RISE Ukraine, where it is offering its expertise through three types of services: training, incubation (mentoring) and acceleration. Integrity Action plans to share similar offers with the Open Society Foundations and other potential partners and funders down the line.

Evaluation question 3: Are Integrity Action's strategic objectives and specific activities appropriate in relation to the needs of its target groups? What should it stop, start, continue, or do differently?

The appropriateness of Integrity Action's strategic objectives and specific activities in relation to the needs of its target groups were determined through its partnership approach and how this sits within global trends that have an impact on the fields in which Integrity Action works.

Value of partnerships:

Integrity Action values its partners' input to guide its work, as they play a key role in its strategy and programme design. The annual partner survey (conducted by Integrity Action) further showed that Integrity Action employs a co-creation and co-led approach to its project design processes and proved that it is a learning organization which receives input through various channels. The review further found that Integrity Action's continuous engagement with partners facilitates an ongoing review of the organisation's work and creates opportunities for troubleshooting and feeding learnings back to its strategy. Furthermore, it was found that engagement of civil society organisation (CSO) peers and funders in the TPA field is also key in Integrity Action's strategy and project design processes.

Selecting the right partners is key:

The evaluation findings show that Integrity Action is placing a lot of attention on how it selects and targets partners. Currently, partnerships are either opportunity led or based on past working experience. Examples of this include strong working relationships built on previous work experience, organisations approaching Integrity Action for partnership, interest from Integrity Action and partner organisation through joint added value, and partner selection in response to funders' geographic priorities. Partner selection has been an ongoing discussion within Integrity Action, with the team weighing up the value of working with organisations with a national footprint versus community-based organisations (CBOs).

Placing citizen's needs at the centre:

Placing citizen needs and priorities is central to Integrity Action's five-year strategy. Integrity Action's approach is based on a feedback system that transfers power to the citizens. Evaluation participants confirmed that Integrity Action's approach was relevant to their needs and ensured the amplification of citizen voices in local development processes. The evaluation also found that Integrity Action actively sought to understand the needs and priorities of citizens in target countries through in-country consultations with partners and the wider community. Furthermore, Integrity Action and its partners also consulted with government in targeted countries, although most of these engagements were at a local level. The use of context analysis, baseline studies and stakeholder mappings, and even the benefits of having a funded co-creation period, were all mentioned as having contributed to the success of the projects.

Integrity Action's role in a more localised development scene

The localisation agenda aligns well with Integrity Action's model and the organisation has actively supported this agenda in forums. Being a northern-based organisation, the dilemma for Integrity Action lies in finding ways to support this agenda without advocating itself out of business. Integrity Action can achieve this by providing a connective tissue of the local and global levels as a knowledge broker that produces and shares learning from across its projects to a wider audience than these projects would likely be able to reach on their own. It can also provide a connective tissue of social accountability/open government actors by contributing to various other groups and networks where they have a seat at the table, including the OGP.

Integrity Action could also act as an intermediary organisation that enables localised funding and helps donor organisation address the challenges they face when shifting funding to smaller, southern-based organisations: through having the right risk profile, by being able to absorb funds, and by lending legitimacy. As such, through its partnerships with locally based organisations Integrity Action can provide a connective tissue that enable these organisations to access donor funding.

Evaluation question 4: To what extent is Integrity Action making, and perceived to be making, a positive, unique and/or complementary contribution to the fields it is connected to? Is it duplicating existing efforts, and if so, where?

The evaluation found that Integrity Action's methodology contributes to the field of social accountability in at least four different ways:

1) its CCA model is perceived to bring value in the form of greater community ownership and citizen agency, also after projects have finished;

2) the methodology uniquely combines citizen feedback and appraisal, thus research deriving from projects contributes to the body of knowledge on social accountability, including on grievance redressal and social audit;

3) its collaborative niche enables the organisation to constructively work with governments at the global level and is particularly appreciated by governments who find more activist-oriented organisations less comfortable to work with; and

4) the use of 'fix rate' as a measure of success contributes to social accountability from a monitoring and evaluation perspective. The fix rate is appealing and useful, particularly from a communications point of view.

In terms of the open government field, Integrity Action's methodology contributes in at least two different ways: 1) their knowledge and experience on how to do participation in practise can greatly contribute to the 'P' in 'TPA' if this expertise is effectively shared; and 2) their methodology of constructive multistakeholder engagement can, in places, work as an antidote to the democratic backlash and may allow the organisation to work in contexts where other open government/social accountability organisations can no longer operate.

Finally, Integrity Action's integration of technology into a citizen engagement methodology is perceived to be a significant contribution to the civic tech field. With DevCheck, a more explicit synergy is being sought between the production of data and the sharing of the data with the public on the one hand and the service provider and the government on the other hand.

Recommendations

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

Progressing towards Achieve by:

- Exploring 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.
- Strengthening local civil society partners with varied approaches and methodologies that can support their in-country collaborative and advocacy efforts (i.e., participatory learning tools, gender analysis skills, youth mobilisation and engagement techniques, policy cycles, budgeting and budget monitoring, coalition building).

Progressing towards Amplify by:

- Assuming a thought leadership role and sharing research and learning in various international forums and across global networks to expand awareness and knowledge of these contributions.
- Strengthening the role of advocate and amplifier, through active participation at relevant forums such as the ongoing renewal of OGP strategy.
- Exploring 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 CCA 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 as also rights-holders and supporting them to navigate governmental hierarchies and hold higher authorities to account.

- identifying, engaging, and building connections between 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:

- Purposefully considering their 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.
- Advocating from the *inside* by embedding the organisation's methodology in larger projects and/or organisations.
- Documenting and sharing lessons learned in adapting social accountability approaches to different contexts, especially fragile states, or countries with a closing civic space.

Acknowledgements

The Southern Hemisphere consulting team wish to thank all stakeholders participating in this evaluation. Special gratitude goes to Jasmina Haynes and Daniel Burwood for ensuring the smooth management of the evaluation process; Daniel Burwood and the entire Integrity Action team for assisting with numerous information requests and fieldwork and lastly, to all informants into the evaluation who shared their time and insights with us.

Abbreviations

CAHURAST	Campaign for Human Rights and Social Transformation
CBO	Community-based organisation
CCA	Citizen-centred accountability
CSO	Civil society organisation
DevCheck	Development Check
DFID	Department for International Development
EACC	Ethics and Anti-corruption Commission
ESCR	Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
GETFund	Ghana Education Trust Fund
GPSA	Global Partnership for Social Accountability
KII	Key informant interview
KYGC	Kwale Youth Governance and Consortium
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
ODK	Open Data Kit
OGP	Open Government Partnership
PARI	Public Affairs Research Institute
PWD	People with disabilities
R&D	Research and development
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SEK	Swedish Kronor
SEND	Social enterprise development
SHINE	Students Acting for Honesty, Integrity & Equality
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SSI	Semi-structured interview
TAI	Transparency and Accountability Initiative
TPA	Transparency, Participation and Accountability
ToC	Theory of change
VOICE	Visibility, Openness, and Integrity through Community Engagement

Table of content

Executive summary i
Acknowledgements vii
Abbreviations viii
Table of content ix
List of illustrations x

1 Background and introduction 1

1.1 Background 1
1.2 Brief description of Integrity Action's theory of change 1

1.2.1 Overall impact goal 1
1.2.2 Integrity Action's strategic objectives 1
1.2.3 Theory of action: How Integrity Action brings about change 2
1.2.4 Theory of change: Changes that Integrity Action expects and likes to see 3
1.2.5 Assumptions embedded in Integrity Action's ToC 3

2 Evaluation approach and questions 5

2.1 Evaluation questions 5
2.2 Evaluation approach 5

3 Evaluation methodology and process 6

3.1 Evaluation methodology 6
3.2 Evaluation process 7
3.3 Limitations to methodology 9

5 Evaluation findings 11

5.1 Introduction 11
5.2 Relevance and appropriateness of strategy and project design 11

5.2.1 The value of partnerships for Integrity Action 11
5.2.2 Selecting the right partners is key 13
5.2.3 Placing citizens' needs at the centre 14
5.2.4 Remaining relevant in the development sector: the localisation trend 15

5.3 Strategy coherence 17

5.3.1 Making a clear contribution to the social accountability field 17
5.3.2 Hands-on experience bring legitimacy to Integrity Action's work 18
5.3.3 Development Check as a unique value proposition 19
5.3.4 Integrity Action's objectives are shared with others while its model is perceived to be unique 20
5.3.5 Harnessing Integrity Action's contributions going forward: a focus on Integrity Action *Inside* 20

5.4 Effectiveness and progress to date 21

5.4.1 Progress in achieving strategic objectives 21
5.4.2 Enablers and strengths of strategy implementation 28
5.4.3 Barriers and challenges 28

5.5 Emerging outcomes 29
5.5.1 Integrity Action is achieving intended outcomes in-country. 29
5.5.2 Integrity Action's global work: *Amplify* and *Convince* 32
5.6 Sustainability 33
5.6.1 To what extent does Integrity Action build sustainability in its work? 33
5.6.2 Extent to which citizen monitoring activities and outcomes will continue post Integrity Action support 35
6 Case studies 37
6.1 Case study 1: M4FS project in Ghana 37
6.2 Case study 2: VOICE programme in Kenya 41
7 Conclusion 48
8 Recommendations 49
Annexure 1: References 50
Annexure 2: Planned versus actual data collection 52

List of illustrations

Tables

Table 1: Planned versus actual data collection summary 8
Table 2: Full breakdown of planned versus actual data collection 52

Figures

Figure 1: Integrity Action's expected changes or outcomes 3
Figure 2: Integrity Action's Theory of Change 4
Figure 3: Evaluation approach and possible questions 6
Figure 4: Evaluation methodologies 7
Figure 5: Improvement in fix rate since Covid-19 pandemic (Integrity Action, 2022) 22
Figure 6: Fix rate categories (*DevCheck website*) 23
Figure 7: Fix rate of problem categories for SEND Ghana 38
Figure 8: Community perceptions of projects monitored by Integrity Action programmes in Ghana 39
Figure 9: Fix rate of problem categories for VOICE Kenya. 43
Figure 10: Community perceptions of projects monitored by Integrity Action programmes in Kenya. 43

1 Background and introduction

1.1 Background

Integrity Action helps citizens monitor the delivery of essential services, infrastructure, and development projects – and then to solve the problems they find. They do this by partnering with a range of organisations in different countries; by producing research, learning, data, and tools that can assist people pursuing similar goals; and by supporting and influencing organisations and institutions to be more inclusive and accountable to citizens.

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) awarded SEK 28,000,000 to Integrity Action to implement its organisational strategy over the 2020–2024 period. This means Sida's 4-year grant is not connected to a specific intervention or programme, but instead to Integrity Action's overall pursuit of its strategic objectives. Sida's support for Integrity Action is part of its 2018–22 strategy and is linked to its objective 'Reduced corruption and increased transparency and accountability'[1].

Integrity Action contracted Southern Hemisphere to conduct the mid-term evaluation of its SIDA grant. The report commences with an overview of the evaluation's purpose and objectives, evaluation methods and sample. The evaluation findings are then discussed, including the design of the theory of change (ToC), the relevance and appropriateness of Integrity Action's strategy, and the extent to which Integrity Action's work contributes to the fields it is connected to. This is followed by a discussion on Integrity Action's progress towards its strategic objectives and the emerging outcomes of its work thus far, as well as the sustainability of its work. Subsequently, the report includes two case studies on the work done by Integrity Action and partners in Kenya and Ghana. Lastly, the report concludes with lessons learned and a set of key recommendations to support Integrity Action in achieving its strategic objectives and overall goal.

1.2 Brief description of Integrity Action's theory of change

The following section provides a brief description of Integrity Action's ToC.

1.2.1 Overall impact goal

Integrity Action's goal is to help **build societies in which all citizens can – and do – successfully demand integrity from the institutions they rely on**.

1.2.2 Integrity Action's strategic objectives

Integrity Action's 2018–2023 strategic objectives are the following:

By 2023, Integrity Action will be at the forefront of demonstrating the transformational value of citizen-centred accountability (CCA) to sustainable development.

1. **Achieve** results for citizens that maximise quality, durability, and inclusivity. This will be done through:

[1] Extracted from the mid-term evaluation of Integrity Action's Sida grant terms of reference.

- working with partners to develop evidence driven, contextualised pathways for sustained and inclusive CCA
- enabling even the most marginalised citizens to act as monitors and to benefit from monitoring
- incentivising institutions to fix at least 50% of the problems citizens identify.

2. **Amplify:** collaborate to amplify results, fuel further innovation and embed citizen-centred accountability. This will be done through:
   - working with partners to sustain and scale up CCA approaches, testing them as they go and evidencing results
   - taking learning and insights from collaborations, feeding into future research and development (R&D) and sharing widely to stimulate improved CCA practice globally
   - being agile with technological developments to ensure the efficiency, accessibility, and local adoption of tools.

3. **Convince:** build a robust case for CCA to inspire its mainstreaming. This will be done through:
   - leading on evidencing the economic, environmental, and social case for CCA
   - building or support coalitions to call for the mainstreaming CCA at the global level and within countries
   - convincing influencers and institutions to demand CCA.

1.2.3 Theory of action: How Integrity Action brings about change[2]

To achieve its goal, Integrity Action intervenes at three key levels: the **individual citizen**, **institutions**, and **the broader system** within which they both function.

At the **citizen-level**, Integrity Action and its local partners provide knowledge and support for communities not only to demand integrity, but also to be involved in exploring the causes of broken promises and seeking solutions. Training is provided on citizens' rights; how to access information about promises that have been made; how to establish whether those promises have been delivered; and how to secure solutions to the problems they find by identifying stakeholders, working collaboratively and navigating local politics and power dynamics. Citizens are also trained on how to use online and collaborative platforms in a constructive and safe manner, ensuring that they engage in both feedback and appraisal.

At the **institutional-level**, Integrity Action and its partners provide managers and other duty bearers with valuable information to support their work. This is done through providing access to Integrity Action's online platform which makes it easier to track project or service performance. Duty bearers are also invited to join collaborative platforms where they engage with citizens.

Integrity Action also works with stakeholders or **actors who are engaged in advocating for systemic policy reform** by providing information on systemic problems that need to be addressed. At this level, Integrity Action seeks to ensure that it maximises the value of its partnerships by making its knowledge and experiences available to actors who can build on it in their advocacy efforts.

[2] integrity-action-theory-of-change.pdf (integrityactionumbracov9.azurewebsites.net).

1.2.4 Theory of change: Changes that Integrity Action expects and likes to see

Integrity Action seeks to influence positive change at three levels: the individual citizen, institutions and the broader system within which they function.

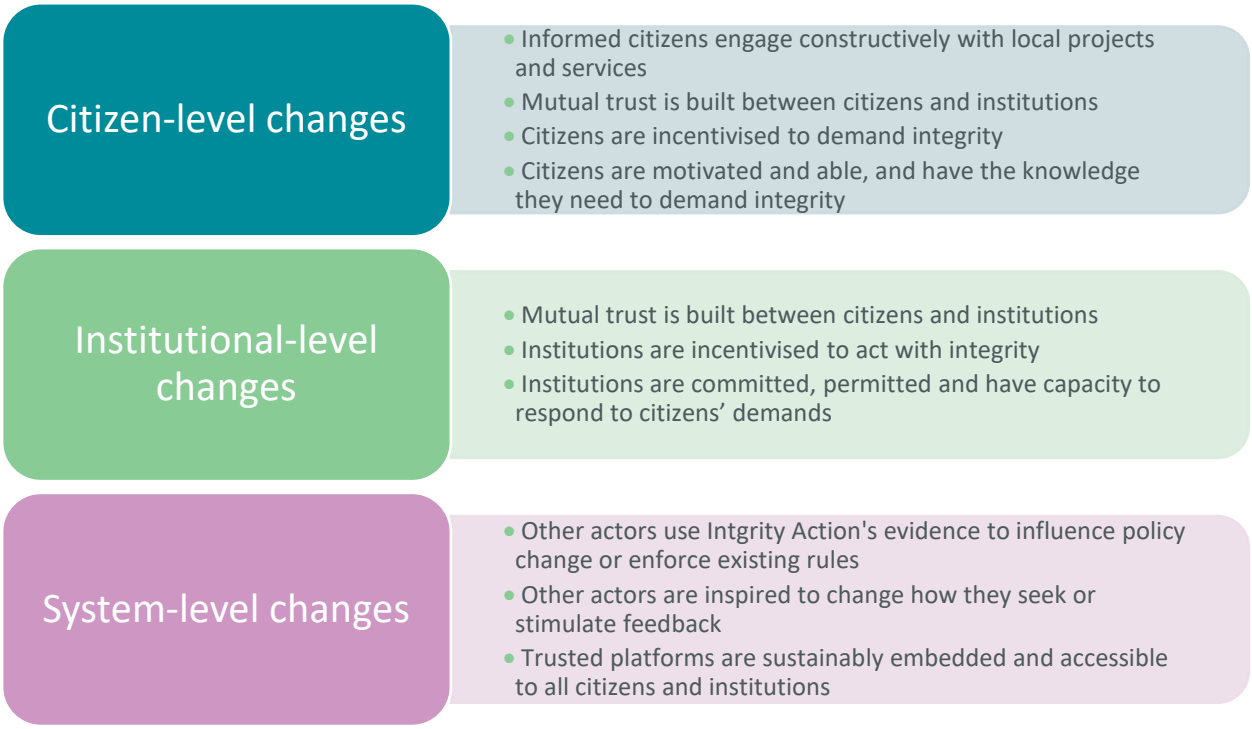

Figure 1: Integrity Action's expected changes or outcomes

1.2.5 Assumptions embedded in Integrity Action's ToC

Two key preconditions or assumptions about the social and cultural context are embedded in Integrity Action's ToC, which, if held true, strengthen its theory and rationale.

The first precondition is that **constructive collaboration should be possible**. This relates to the institutional side of Integrity Action's ToC and refers to the fact that the approach will not work in a location or sector where constructive engagement with duty bearers is not feasible.

The second precondition is that **reasonable safety can be assured**. This relates to the citizen side of Integrity Action's theory, stating that if it is impossible for citizens to demand integrity while remaining safe, then they cannot be reasonably expected to demand integrity.

Below is a diagram that depicts Integrity Action's ToC.

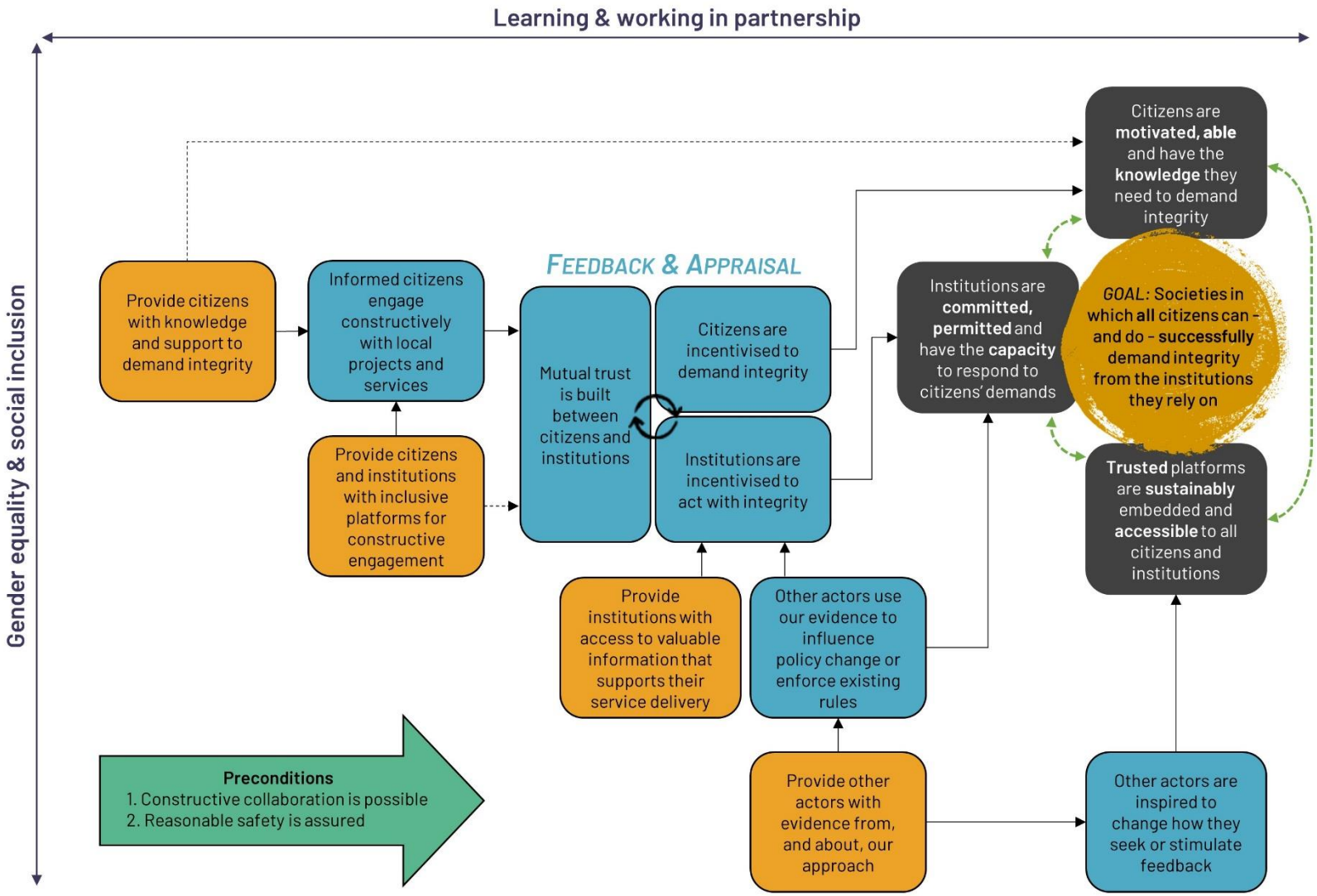

Figure 2: Integrity Action's Theory of Change

2 Evaluation approach and questions

2.1 Evaluation questions

The core questions[3] this evaluation addressed were the following:

1. What progress has Integrity Action made towards its strategic objectives and to what extent is it on course to achieve them by September 2024?
2. What relationships exist between progress achieved and activities carried out by Integrity Action? In particular, what contributions towards strategic progress have been made by:
    - "in-country added value", i.e., results achieved through Integrity Action's programmes and partnerships in specific countries
    - "global added value", i.e., results achieved on a wider scale than "in-country added value", such as through promotion of Integrity Action's methodology and research?
3. Are Integrity Action's strategic objectives and specific activities appropriate in relation to the needs of its target groups? What should it stop, start, continue or do differently?
4. To what extent is Integrity Action making and perceived to be making a positive, unique and/or complementary contribution to the fields it is connected to? Is it duplicating existing efforts, and if so, where?

2.2 Evaluation approach

The objective of this mid-term evaluation was to assess the organisation's progress towards its strategic objectives, identify implementation strengths and challenges and incorporate key learnings as part of its adaptive strategy approach. The evaluation questions were therefore unpacked through a **looking back, looking around and looking forward** reflection technique illustrated in Figure 3 below.

[3] Extracted from the mid-term evaluation of Integrity Action's Sida grant TOR.

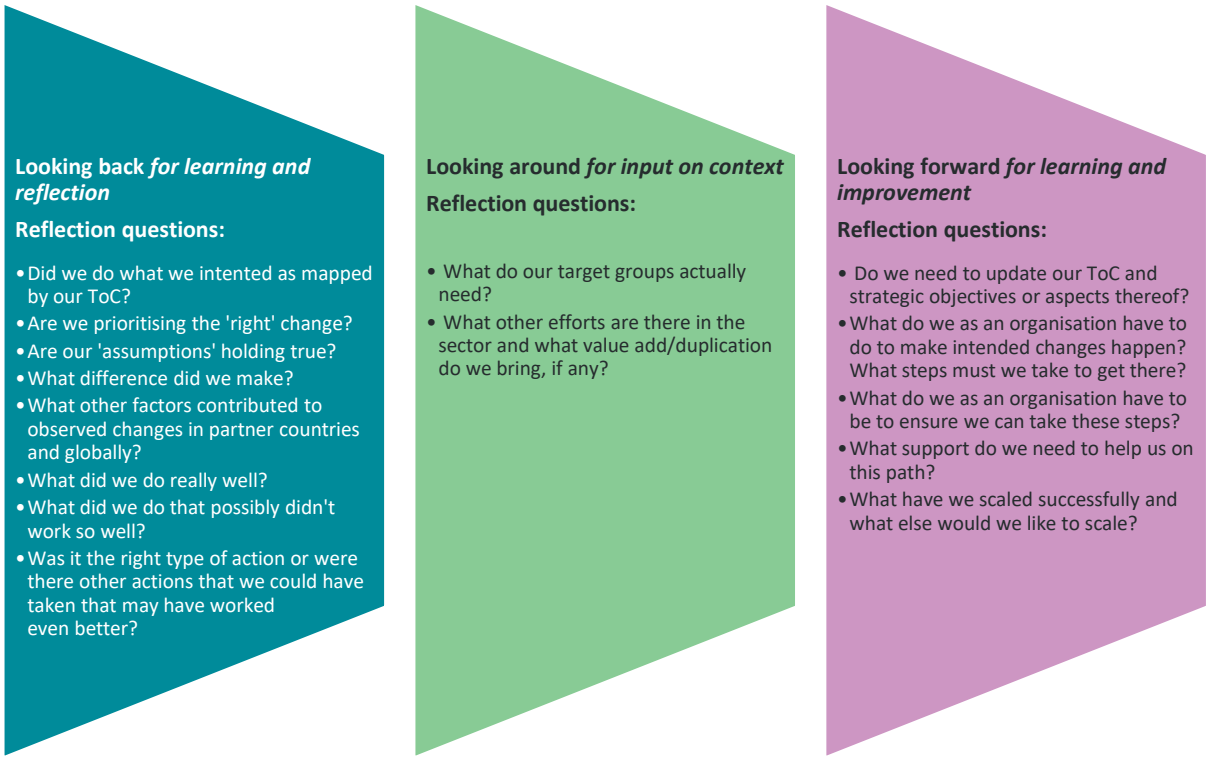

Figure 3: Evaluation approach and possible questions

3 Evaluation methodology and process

3.1 Evaluation methodology

This evaluation followed a **theory-based, participatory approach**, focused primarily on qualitative data collected through various methods including key informant interviews (KIIs), semi-structured interviews (SSIs), group interviews and a sense-making[4] workshop with key stakeholders. The evaluation team also produced two **case studies** on Kenya and Ghana, which enabled it to zoom in on specific outcomes, interventions and the pathways between them. This mix of approaches allowed the evaluation team to assess the programme's global reach while honing in on critical examples of work which were selected based on geographic, thematic or programmatic relevance in an efficient manner.

Figure 4 below depicts the approaches used in the mid-term review of Integrity Action's SIDA grant.

[4] Sense-making is a collaborative process in which information is translated into knowledge and then wisdom. Sensemaking often involves stakeholders from different organisations coming together to look at information across common themes or sectors.

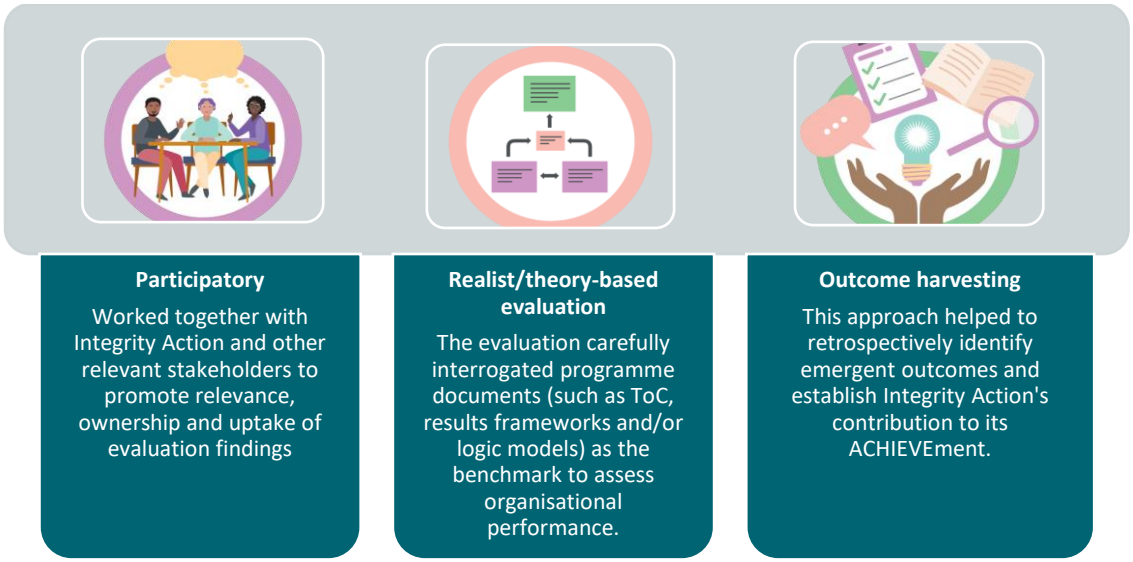

Figure 4: Evaluation methodologies[5]

3.2 Evaluation process

The evaluation process for this mid-term review consisted of four phases: the inception and design phase; the data collection phase; the data analysis phase; and the report writing and sharing of findings phase.

Inception and design phase

The evaluation team facilitated a virtual inception meeting with the Integrity Action evaluation management team on 9 November 2022 to finalise the evaluation approach, methodology and sample and agree on the evaluation workplan and timeframes. The workshop outputs were captured in an inception report.

This phase also involved an intense document review to help the evaluation team better understand Integrity Action's organisational strategy, review its monitoring data and impact tracker, identify outcomes that were probed during data collection and inform the sample design and data collection instrument development. In addition, the evaluation team facilitated a ToC review workshop with the Integrity Action management team on 14 December 2022, which helped the team unpack and assess assumptions embedded in the ToC.

[5] Outcome harvesting is an evaluation approach that allows us to retrospectively identify emergent impact by collecting examples of what has changed in behaviour (actions, relationships, policies, practices) and then work backwards to determine whether and how an intervention has contributed to these changes. It helps identify outcomes at the level of sphere of control (tactics, inputs, activities), influence (behaviour, relationships, attitudes, agenda) and concern (broader policy context) of a programme. Outcomes are confirmed by one or more individuals who are independent of the intervention (third party) but knowledgeable about one or more of the outcomes and the change agent's contribution.

Data collection phase

Qualitative data was collected through KIIs, SSIs, group interviews and a sense-making workshop. KIIs, SSIs and group interviews were conducted both in person and virtually (e.g., Zoom or MS Teams) with relevant actors to gather rich insights, into the *looking back, looking around* and *looking forward* aspects of the study. A summarised version of planned versus actual data collection is provided in Table 1 below. The full breakdown is provided in **Annexure 2** of this report.

Table 1: Planned versus actual data collection summary

Sphere according to OH methodology	Key stakeholders	Planned data collection	Actual data collection
Control	Integrity Action management and implementing team, board member and past staff	1 group interview and 3 KIIs	1 group interview and 3 KIIs
Influence	Partner organisations	7 KIIs and 3 group interviews	7 KIIs and 3 group interviews
		2 x sense-making sessions	1 x sense-making session
	Citizen monitors (prioritising marginalised and vulnerable populations)	6 SSIs	6 SSIs
	Other key players in the field (such as Transparency and Accountability Initiative, Global Integrity and/or International Development Research Centre)	7 SSIs	6 SSIs
	Funders	2 SSIs	6 SSIs
Interest/concern	Government officials, policymakers and institutions engaged by the Integrity Action's partners	4 SSIs	4 SSIs
Total: 10 KIIs; 22 SSIs; 1 sense-making session; 4 group interviews			

Case studies

The evaluation team also conducted a deep dive into the emerging outcomes through a case study approach using elements of outcome harvesting. Two case studies were selected, namely the Visibility, Openness and Integrity through Community Engagement (VOICE) Programme in Kenya and the Monitoring for Financial Savings (M4FS) Programme in Ghana. The data collection for these case studies was sequenced, starting with an interview with each of the partner organisations. The citizen monitors and government officials/policy makers were then interviewed to validate identified outcomes and the partner organisations' contribution. Data from each of these stakeholder groups was triangulated with each other, with the document review written up as short case studies.

Sense-making workshops

A sense-making workshop with programme partners and key role players was conducted on 22 February 2023 after fieldwork had concluded. The sense-making session focused on two key themes emerging from the data:

- **Theme 1:** Preliminary findings point towards Integrity Action and partners' aspiration to **move beyond the project level/fix rate as a key metric towards a bigger scale that addresses systemic issues** at the country level.
- **Theme 2:** Integrity Action's knowledge generation and dissemination in the social accountability space is a key feature of its future strategy; however, **not enough is known about what knowledge, tools and expertise civil society, government champions and others need** in their efforts to promote accountability and responsiveness in service delivery.

These themes were collectively unpacked by stakeholders and the evaluation team, from which relevant and robust recommendations for the future of Integrity Action's strategy were put forward.

Data analysis phase

Systematic and rigorous thematic analysis of qualitative data was conducted using NVivo 12. This tool helped organise the data into pre-established categories and identify thematic trends in the data. Findings were triangulated to ensure their validity and credibility.

Report writing and sharing of findings phase

The evaluation team prepared a draft report which was submitted to Integrity Action for review and feedback. As part of Southern Hemisphere's participatory approach, relevant stakeholders were invited and attended a feedback and recommendations workshop on the 6 March 2023. Based on the input from the feedback and recommendations workshop, this final evaluation report was finalised. An engaging evaluation summary that is reader-friendly and visually engaging was also produced.

3.3 Limitations to methodology

The following reflects challenges and limitations to the methodology which all relate to the sampling for the primary data collection.

Potential biases

Since this evaluation is based on qualitative research, which by its nature relies to a large degree on subjective interpretation of data, credibility (such as are the findings true) and confirmability of findings (such as are the findings absent of research biases) are salient issues.

We have sought to mitigate any biases by triangulating data from different sources, working as a team to code, analyse and discuss the data and findings, and discussing the findings in the sense making session. However, since the available data draws from a sample of individuals and projects, if there were any biases in the sampling, they will have travelled through the analysis and influenced the findings.

Size of change

Many of the outcomes discussed in the evaluation are intangible by nature and therefore very difficult to measure. As such, when we report that Integrity Action's work have resulted in an increase in capacity, empowerment, trust, accountability, etc. there is no way of knowing what the size of this change is, i.e., how much empowerment, trust etc., the project contributed to increasing.

As such, improvement, large and small, are reported the same. This is methodological conundrum inherent in researching social accountability through qualitative research, which we can acknowledge but not properly mitigate.

Timing of primary data collection

Data collection was scheduled during the December–January period, which is traditionally the festive season in the global south. This meant securing interviews with key stakeholders required additional coordination effort which pushed the initial fieldwork schedule back by a week. Despite this delay, the evaluation team managed to complete its planned fieldwork, aside from one interview with a key role player.

5 Evaluation findings

5.1 Introduction

This section assesses Integrity Action's co-creation and participatory approach in strategy and project design. It begins by discussing the involvement of partner organisations, other civil society organisations (CSOs) and funders in informing Integrity Action's organisational strategy and local level programme design. It then continues to provide a brief discussion on the extent to which the needs and priorities of the citizens and duty bearers were considered and how this was done. The section ends with a brief discussion on how target countries, partners and projects are appraised and selected.

5.2 Relevance and appropriateness of strategy and project design

This section addresses how appropriate Integrity Action's strategic objectives and specific activities are in relation to the needs of its target groups. The section starts by looking at Integrity Action's partnership approach, drawing from interviews and Integrity Action-administered partner surveys. From there, the lens widens and turns to how Integrity Action's approach sits within global trends having an impact on the fields in which Integrity Action works.

5.2.1 The value of partnerships for Integrity Action

Integrity Action values its partners' input to guide its work, as illustrated by the following quote:

> *"Whether our partners are national or international NGOs, community-based organisations or international foundations, their opinions and experiences of working with us matter."* (Excerpt from Integrity Action's Annual Report, 2022)

The annual partner survey Integrity Action conducts is one of the key channels by which it obtains feedback from partner organisations. Acknowledgement of Integrity Action's co-creation and co-led approach to project design processes has been a common thread in partner survey results in 2020–2022. According to the latest partners' survey (2022), 88% (15 out of 17 partner respondents) reported being "very satisfied" with Integrity Action's partnership and the value that Integrity Action brings to their organisation's work. Further, 71% of respondents said that the partnership with Integrity Action had improved their organisational approach to other programmes. Improvements stemmed from the collaborative ways of working and engaging as equals, Integrity Action's safeguarding training and the use of technology for community monitoring. Most respondents also thought the partnership with Integrity Action had contributed to their visibility/profile, for example, through enhancing their interactions with local government officials. Capacity development was expressed by respondents as both a current benefit to partnering with Integrity Action and something that Integrity Action should provide more of.

Some of these themes were reinforced in the interviews undertaken for this evaluation.

The evaluation findings show that partner organisations played an integral role in shaping Integrity Action's current organisational strategy. Information obtained from interviews with Integrity Action staff confirm that the 2018–2023 strategy was largely informed by key lessons from the organisation's previous strategy, widespread consultations with partner organisations and CSOs in the sector, as well as key funders. These consultations enabled partners and Integrity Action to

review their collaborative work and get input on Integrity Action's strategic direction, as illustrated by the following quote:

> *"We had a structured formal process that was embedded in review of our then ongoing grounds. We had discussions about our methodology, results achieved and how we could improve. These conversations were valuable in the design process."* (Integrity Action organisation representative)

For example, when partnering with SEND-Ghana, with a rich track record in the field of good governance and gender equality in Ghana, the two organisations worked together to conceptualise a project where they could leverage off each other's strengths as explained in the following quote:

> *"We worked together with Integrity Action to conceptualise the project together. What Integrity Action did was to help us find better ways of doing what we do. There were regular meetings – quite a number of meetings and correspondences, reviewing budgets, logframe, and the workplan together."* (Partner organisation representative)

Another example of co-creation is the development of training materials used during implementation that are produced in partnership with the partner organisations. The following quote substantiates this claim:

> *"We had the opportunity to work with Integrity Action to develop a curriculum for our education project. Following this we had a meeting with the Ministry of Education and they showed great interest in it and suggested we develop a reference book that all sectors can use. We co-developed this reference book, and it has since been shared in other municipalities."* (Partner organisation representative)

Integrity Action's collaborative approach means that partners are consulted throughout the project management cycle through monthly meetings, quarterly steering group meetings and working groups, among others. These forums aim to support partners in troubleshooting implementation challenges and to feed learnings back into Integrity Action's strategy in line with its adaptive management approach.

> *"Our monthly conversations with Integrity Action were very fruitful, as I mentioned earlier, the challenges often come abruptly, so these conversations were a platform where these concerns could be raised and Integrity Action could offer support and recommendations. We would also offer our recommendations which they would take on board."* (Partner organisation representative)

Similarly, Integrity Action was commended for having a good organisational learning culture. Investing in data collection, reflection and introspection, in turn, enable it to embrace an adaptive approach and course correct as contexts or circumstances change. This adaptive approach has taken various forms in projects; for example, in Kenya, Integrity Action agreed with the partner organisation Kwale Youth Governance and Consortium (KYGC) to develop and use an open access

tool called Kobotoolbox (Kobo)[6], and in so doing respond to this partner's needs. The adaptive approach is also used at the organisational strategy level with Integrity Action's strategy plan being evaluated every year to ensure the objectives are still relevant.

In addition to partner organisations, Integrity Action also consulted CSO peers and other organisations, predominantly in the transparency and accountability field. These consultations were mostly informal and included face-to-face engagements. In some instances, the draft strategy document was shared for review and comment by stakeholders.

> *"We shared drafts and preliminary views of our strategy with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Open Contracting Partnership. Given their experience, we discussed where we felt Integrity Action could have done better and what was working well."* (Integrity Action Organisation representative)

The evaluation findings show that Integrity Action also actively engaged funders during the strategy development process. This includes both funders of its work and potential funders such as the Luminate Foundation. Engagement with the funders helped to get their perspectives on the work done by Integrity Action and its relevance in the broader transparency and accountability field. A key part of those conversations was also to get feedback on what Integrity Action should safeguard from current implementation to take into the next strategic period (2020–2024).

5.2.2 Selecting the right partners is key

Selection of partner organisations happens in two ways, including a combination of 'opportunity-led' (partnerships, funding available etc.) and building on previous experience. Below are some of the ways in which partnerships have come about:

- Partnerships based on having built a strong relationship from a previous experience.
- Organisations approach Integrity Action for a partnership. A compatibility check would be done in such cases to assess the extent to which values align.
- Interest from both Integrity Action and the partner organisation due to joint added value.
- Partners selected in response to funders' geographic priorities.

Interviews with Integrity Action staff indicate that some of the key considerations in terms of partner selection include an assessment of alignment with Integrity Action's ToC as well as their ability to work with target groups.

> *''Recently we decided that we need to be more focused on our target groups. Since then, we really fine-tuned the selection approach. If a partner gets in touch, we do due diligence by starting with a context analysis, assessing their agency and legitimacy to work with the target groups.''* (Integrity Action organisation representative)

Partner selection has been an ongoing discussion within Integrity Action, with the team weighing up the value of working with organisations with a national footprint versus those with community access and legitimacy on the ground, among other considerations. The partnerships with SEND

[6] KoboToolbox is a data collection, management, and visualization platform used globally for research and social good. It supports open-source data systems and technology for humanitarian action, development, environmental protection, peacebuilding, and human rights. Available: https://www.kobotoolbox.org/.

Ghana and PARI and SALGA in South Africa are examples of Integrity Action targeting partners with the capacity to achieve changes at a larger scale, either by covering work across several subregions and/or advocating for CCA processes at the national level. The strategic partnership with a larger organisation like the Aga Khan Foundation has also enabled Integrity Action to apply its approach in different ways and at a scale that the organisation would not have been able to achieve alone.[7] These efforts respond to Integrity Action's strategic intent under **Amplify** and are an appropriate step towards improving service delivery for citizens in target countries.

5.2.3 Placing citizens' needs at the centre

A review of key strategy documents shows that prioritising citizens' needs and priorities is central to Integrity Action's 5-year strategy (2020–2024). To begin with, Integrity Action's approach is based on the need to create a feedback system that transfers power to citizens (Integrity Action, 2018). This is closely aligned with the organisation's ultimate goal of achieving "societies in which all citizens can and do successfully demand integrity from the institutions they rely on".[8] Integrity Action's approach and goal both point to the importance of citizen voices in its strategy.

Evaluation respondents discussed the governance and service delivery challenges they experience and the relevance of Integrity Action's approach in their contexts. Interviewees consistently described how citizens are often unaware of planned development projects or have no say in the setting of local development priorities, as illustrated by the following quote.

> *"We were normally not consulted on projects – for example, one may need a borehole and the assembly may rather put up a mosque."* (Monitor)

Community members in target countries tend not to participate in local decision-making processes because the engagement channels and platforms are unavailable, ineffective or citizens do not feel they have a role to play. In Nepal, for example, community members would resort to protests to voice their concerns about the lack of service delivery. In Kenya, the absence of effective accountability mechanisms at the local level resulted in mismanagement of funds and delivery of low-quality projects. In northern Uganda, where citizen monitoring structures did exist, local authorities were not always responsive or accountable to community members.

> *"For example, there was a maternity whose committee members were all elderly male..."* (Partner organisation representative)

The evaluation found that Integrity Action actively sought to understand the needs and priorities of citizens in target countries through in-country consultations with partners and the wider community. Trained monitors were engaged to obtain feedback about the relevance and appropriateness of their approach and methodology. Consultations with citizens or the broader community explored their perspectives on the approach and its impact and their understanding of the monitors' role.

Furthermore, Integrity Action and its partners also consulted with government in targeted countries. Most of these engagements were at a local level. For example, in Kenya, an Integrity Action representative engaged with district level authorities around the approach, results achieved and

[7] https://www.integrityaction.org/what-we-do/impact/.
[8] Integrity Action's ToC.

how results are influencing decision-making. The use of context analysis, baseline studies and stakeholder mappings, and even the benefits of having a funded co-creation period, were all mentioned as having contributed to the success of the projects.

5.2.4 Remaining relevant in the development sector: the localisation trend

Localisation of development cooperation is a current trend in international development. Simply put, this 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. This trend, which goes under the names of localisation, decolonising development cooperation, community ownership and locally-led development, has as its core the assumption that development actors' work is more effective, more resilient and more equitable when local partners play a lead role in identifying sectors, planning programmes, implementing projects and evaluating progress (Steinberg, 2022).

Normatively, the localisation agenda aligns well with Integrity Action's model and Integrity Action has actively supported this agenda in forums such as the 'Practice for Locally Led Development Working Group,' hosted by Bond (Bond, 2022). Being a northern-based organisation, the dilemma for Integrity Action lies in finding ways to support this agenda without advocating itself out of business. The key may be to capitalise on its role as an intermediary organisation that can provide connective tissue from the local to the global level.

In a recent report, Peace Direct identified nine roles that intermediate organisations can play as the development agenda turns increasingly localised: as interpreter, knowledge broker and producer, training, coach and co-learner, convenor, connector and eco-system builder, advocate and amplifier, watchdog, critical friend, and sidekick (Green, 2013) (Elbers, 2022)

From the interviews conducted for this evaluation, Integrity Action's role as knowledge broker and producer was highlighted. Producing and sharing knowledge about the work it supports can be a meaningful intermediary function for a northern-based organisation, like Integrity Action, to embrace. By producing/co-producing knowledge products that use insights and experiences from the projects it supports and disseminating this to a global audience, Integrity Action can provide the connective tissue between its southern-based partners and the social accountability and open government community of actors at the global level. With Integrity Action's partnership approach and deep engagement in the projects, coupled with its strength in research and learning, the organisation should have a comparative advantage in undertaking this function. To capitalise on this role, it will be important for Integrity Action to continue to be visible at international conferences and present research. Having partners' logos and/or co-authorship on research products would also capitalise on this connecting role.

Likewise, Integrity Action should strengthen its advocate and amplifier role, and its active participation in the ongoing renewal of Open Government Partnership's (OGP) strategy (Open Government Partnership, 2022) is a good example of this. Other examples are Integrity Action's contributions to various groups and networks where it has a seat at the table, including Bond's Future Dialogues Group through which Integrity Action leverages its knowledge and experience of citizen-centred accountability to influence the British as well as the global development sector.

As an intermediary organisation, Integrity Action can also provide the necessary connective tissue to enable donors to channel funding to organisations at the local level.

In practice, localising development means a larger portion of development funding goes directly to local civil society, business and other institutions that are supported by and accountable to local communities. This, in turn, requires that modalities and systems within donor agencies can accommodate and effectively channel funding to a broader set of organisations. Increasing the proportion of funding provided to local partners can be done via two channels: direct funding or the 'as direct as possible' funding approach. Direct funding refers to unrestricted core funding or project funding that is directed from donors to local organisations without passing through any intermediaries. 'As direct as possible' funding includes partner funding, network funding and country-based pooled funds that make funding accessible to national and local actors in a non-direct way (Barba Prieto, et al., 2021). The 'as direct as possible' route is where Integrity Action can provide a connecting tissue.

Donors that wish to fund local-level organisations in the global south must overcome at least three key challenges when doing so, and using an intermediary organisation, like Integrity Action, can help them better achieve this goal.

The first challenge concerns risk. As international aid money is channelled from taxpayer money in donor countries, donors are under pressure to mitigate risk by having strict systems in place to ensure aid is not squandered or wasted (fiduciary risk) or used by organisations that, for example, put beneficiaries at risk due to inadequate safeguarding practices. While more established international development actors have aligned their systems to accommodate this risk averseness, smaller and newer local actors will not yet have done so.

As such, from a risk perspective, donor agencies still have powerful incentives for maintaining upward accountability and maintaining resource control and would likely choose funding modalities in line with 'as direct as possible' as opposed to direct funding to local development actors (Ferrell-Schweppenstedde, n.d.).

> *"Funding, and compliance requirements linked to it, seem to be one of the biggest barriers to locally led development. From a lack of unrestricted funds to overly complex funding applications, strict compliance requirements and programme design dictated by funding criteria rather than users' needs, the way funding currently works paradoxically cuts off those organisations who need funding the most." (Renna, 2022)*

Apart from risk, portioning up funding into smaller parcels to adjust to the size and absorption capacity of local actors comes with a high administrative price tag which donor agencies cannot easily accommodate. In other words, from an administrative perspective, it is less labour intensive to fund fewer and larger projects, which sits uneasily with directly supporting small local actors.

Using the example of Swedish Sida, while this bilateral donor agency has increased its support to CSOs as a share of total support (to about 40% of its entire aid budget), Sida's annual reports show that this support is mainly channelled to international CSOs and not directly to local actors in partner countries. Between 2013 and 2021, Sida's funding to international CSOs as a share of all funding went up from 48% to 59% (peaking at 65%), while funding to local CSOs fell from 13% to 10% over the same period (Gulrajani & Mills, 2019).

Finally, some more ideological barriers to working with local partners were identified and these concern stereotypes about who is 'trustworthy' to implement projects (Estes, et al., 2021). An intermediary can lend the necessary legitimacy to organisations in the global south that donors might have been wary of supporting directly.

> *"The widespread view is that donors – I am also going to add international organisations here – see these organisations as too weak, both in terms of capabilities and accountability, and therefore need "capacity building" at best, if not a "Northern" guarantor at worst."* (Renna, 2022)

In relation to all three challenges, Integrity Action is well positioned through its partnerships with locally based organisations to provide a connective tissue to enable these organisations to access donor funding. However, Integrity Action still need to effectively convey this position. As one interviewee argued:

> *"I think there are ways that groups like Integrity Action can tell a story that sort of helps reassure donors on this front [and] I still think having a storyline about their role and how it's evolving is going to be very helpful."* (Social accountability sector organisation representative)

5.3 Strategy coherence

This section addresses the evaluation question "To what extent is Integrity Action making, and perceived to be making, a positive, unique and/or complementary contribution to the fields it is connected to?" It draws heavily on contributions from interviewees from Integrity Action's partners and representatives of organisations operating in the fields of social accountability and open government.

5.3.1 Making a clear contribution to the social accountability field

Integrity Action's methodology contributes to the field of social accountability in at least four different ways.

First, Integrity Action's citizen-centred accountability model, which ensures that citizens lead on engaging government and others to fix the problems they have identified in their communities, is perceived to bring value in the form of greater ownership and agency, also post-project, as one partner said:

> *"The approach that Integrity Action was using was community-led, so these community members understood that it was the role of each and every one within the community to contribute to the effectiveness of our services. It was taken up as a community ownership thing, and as a result it became more sustainable as everyone came up with, and shared, solutions."* (Partner organisation representative)

Second, through the citizen monitors, Integrity Action's methodology uniquely combines citizen feedback and appraisal. These two aspects of social accountability, citizen feedback mechanisms, for example, citizen report cards and social audit, are not commonly combined, therefore adding a uniqueness to Integrity Action's contribution to the field of social accountability. When Integrity Action produces research derived from its projects, contributions are also made to the wider literature of social accountability, including on grievance redressal and social audit.

A third contribution to the social accountability field is Integrity Action's collaborative niche, which emphasises constructive engagement with both citizens and duty bearers. Social accountability as a field is commonly more activist-oriented, and few social accountability models focus on constructively engaging both governments and citizens. The value of Integrity Action's more collaborative approach was expressed in the following ways by two different stakeholders:

> *"CBOs have a tendency to be very militant and negative in their approach and I didn't get that sense when I went to visit the counties. And I think this speaks to Integrity Action's ability to engage with government in a meaningful manner and their ability to integrate into existing structures."* (Partner organisation representative)

> *"The current [project] approach has also improved relationship between community and duty bearer. We have organised training with both groups, creating opportunity for them to work together, which made them realise that they complete each other."* (Partner organisation representative)

The collaborative approach also enables Integrity Action to effectively work with governments at the global level. An example of this comes from Integrity Action's work with the OGP which operates a multi-stakeholder collaborative platform. Integrity Action's collaborative approach is particularly appreciated by governments who find more activist-oriented organisations less comfortable to work with.

Fourth, the use of 'fix rate' as a measure of success is worth mentioning as a contribution to the social accountability field from a monitoring and evaluation perspective. The social accountability field has always struggled to find ways to measure impact, especially through quantitative measures. As such, the fix rate as a proxy for impact is appealing and useful, particularly from a communications point of view, as one interviewee asserted:

> *"One of the key things was about the 'fix rate' of how many problems we were fixing. This was really important for securing the next phase of the grant – being able to prove that the concept worked. So, the kind of the quantitative data that Integrity Action gave us was invaluable as it allowed us to prove that the approach worked, and it brought an element of rigor to the approach as well."* (Partner organisation representative)

It has been pointed out, however, that the fix rate and the wider Integrity Action methodology focuses on the lowest level of public decision-making and therefore may not be able to measure and/or influence any of the underlying problems and bottlenecks whose mere symptoms end up in the fix rate statistics. If these problems are caused upstream in the decision-making hierarchy, then Integrity Action's methodology would have a larger impact if it were to find entry points to affect those levels of decision-making too, for example by empowering officials at the lower government decision level to demand change upstream. Helping officials analyse and present the monitoring data, including through policy briefs, might be one such entry point.[9]

5.3.2 Hands-on experience bring legitimacy to Integrity Action's work

A key contribution to the open government field of transparency, accountability and participation lies in Integrity Action's knowledge and experience on how to do participation in practice. When open government first started as a sector, transparency was a clear focus among most organisations. Then, accountability became the core focus area. In the last few years, participation as a focus area has had a large upswing. However, not may organisations know how to do participation in practice,

[9] It should be acknowledged that some partners, notably VOICE in Kenya, are trying to focus on this higher advocacy level.

thus, Integrity Action has great potential to add value to this field. This was expressed in the following way by one interviewee:

> *"I think what Integrity Action brings to the field and to OGP is actually being able to integrate citizen participation in policies... That is a technical skill, a sort of understanding how it's done, which is not out there that much."* (Social accountability sector organisation representative)

Demand for these skills has, for example, come from the OGP's Local Government Programme for which Integrity Action has provided information and practical training on how citizen participation works in practice and given some local governments more hands-on one-to-one advice and coaching. Other examples where collaboration with OGP has yielded impact for Integrity Action include Moldova where OGPs delivering partner learned about Integrity Action's model and embedded some of the aspects around citizen appraisal of services in its approach.

Finally, Integrity Action contributes to the open government community of actors pushing to revive citizen engagement beyond the election cycle as an antidote to the democratic backlash that has happened globally in recent years (V-Dem Institute, 2020). Integrity Action is in a good position to contribute to this wider democratisation agenda through the narrative (backed up by research) of how involving citizens in government delivery of services and creating a feedback loop (the fix rate) contributes to citizens being more pleased with duty bearers, which in turn, for politicians, can mean additional votes in the next election. Focusing on how citizen engagement can lead to better public infrastructure and services and thus create win-win situations for both governments and citizens is a strong entry point for Integrity Action into this agenda. That focus should also enable Integrity Action to work in places where other organisations in this space, notably those that are more focused on advocacy and/or have a more antagonistic approach to holding governments to account, have trouble working.

5.3.3 Development Check as a unique value proposition

The interlinkage between technology and development that is created through Development Check (DevCheck) is perceived to be making a positive and unique contribution to the civic technology field. This is how an interviewee talked of this interlinkage:

> *"The DevCheck app was easy to use for the monitors to report on construction projects and service delivery projects, and through this app we can see measurable impact and result, and we could use this information as evidence to demand change at the policy level."* (Partner organisation representative)

While DevCheck is a tool that connects the monitoring and engagement, Integrity Action's approach is not perceived to be tool-based, as expressed by one interviewee:

> *"There are dangers that the technology becomes the 'be all and end all' but that's not the case in the way Integrity Action implements their programmes. They have a set of clear objectives and principles about what needs to be done, which is not only about monitoring but also about giving and enabling agency among citizens to influence process."* (Partner organisation representative)

Usually, through civic technology, information is obtained, translated into a digestible format and made available, and it is entirely up to the person receiving it to decide whether and how to use it.

With DevCheck, a more explicit synergy is being sought between the production of data (the monitoring through which the data is produced) and the sharing of the data with the public on the one hand and the service provider and the government on the other hand. In that way, Integrity Action's integration of technology into a citizen engagement methodology is perceived to be a significant contribution to the civic technology field. Put differently, questions that usually remain unanswered through civic technology approaches, including who uses the data, is the data reaching the relevant authorities and are those authorities recognising the gaps highlighted by the data, are possible to grasp through DevCheck.

5.3.4 Integrity Action's objectives are shared with others while its model is perceived to be unique

The evaluation team asked interviewees to identify any organisation that they thought occupied the same space as Integrity Action. While a long list of organisations ensued, these organisations had working practices that align with different parts of Integrity Action's methodology, but none overlapped, with no sense of duplication in this space.

In the social accountability space, the World Bank's Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA), similarly to Integrity Action, uses a social accountability model based on multi-stakeholder collaboration that constructively engage citizens, CSOs and government at different levels. However, unlike Integrity Action, the GPSA does not have as clear a methodology it deploys across projects. World Vision and its community-focused social accountability model was also mentioned as having aspects in common with Integrity Action's approach.

In the open government field, many organisations were mentioned, including the International Budget Partnership, some country chapters of Transparency International, Article 19 and some of the COST multistakeholder groups and groups like G-Watch in the Philippines, and Democratic Society.

Finally, some work of governments was mentioned, for example the experimentation in Spain (both in Madrid and Barcelona) that involve online participation platforms focusing on both participation and monitoring, that have also been taken up by other governments.

5.3.5 Harnessing Integrity Action's contributions going forward: a focus on Integrity Action *Inside*

With a small but strong team and a well-known methodology, Integrity Action's best chance to make large impact may be for its approach, or part of it, to become an embedded as part of other organisations' engagements, in other words, moving to an Integrity Action *Inside* model. The potential for rolling out Integrity Action's methodology, or parts thereof, is seemingly endless. It could become mainstreamed into the likes of the World Bank portfolio of projects[10], become a standard component across the portfolio of projects by larger organisations like Oxfam or even become a new way of doing social corporate responsibility if partnering with the private sector.

In other words, Integrity Action *Inside* could take a variety of shapes, ultimately depending on the Integrity Action package offered to be embedded would contain and the level of standardisation of

[10] Such a citizen engagement component is currently being streamlined through strategic framework for mainstreaming citizen engagement in World Bank group operations (Bank, n.d.).

this package. The more standardised the package, for example, a streamlined version of DevCheck, the greater the potential for reaching scale. However, reaching scale in that way may risk losing many of the abovementioned benefits that partnering with Integrity Action comes with, including the agile and adaptive approach, contextual grounding and the project co-creation process.

In another scenario, Integrity Action *Inside* could mean basing partnerships on 'service packages' with a set of at least semi-standardised, expertise-based services that partners could choose from and co-create projects around. This would retain the current close partnership model but would be a way of gaining efficiency, and thereby gaining potential for scale-up, by not having to start a partnership from scratch every time.

Integrity Action's current offer in relation to a post-war reconstruction project in Ukraine[11] is in line with the second scenario, whereby the organisation offers its expertise through three types of services: training, incubation (mentoring) and acceleration (Integrity Action, n.d.). Integrity Action is planning to share similar offers with the Open Society Foundations and other potential partners and funders down the line.

The upcoming merger with Crown Agents could also allow for an Integrity Action *Inside* version to materialise whereby rather than Integrity Action finding funding to run projects itself, it could focus on bringing in its methodology and specialised expertise to existing projects. This merger may well be a natural progression in Integrity Action's organisational evaluation, especially if it wishes to stay a small organisation, which one interviewee expressed in the following way:

> *"Because they are in some sense like a tech company, and in those companies what they would do is either merge with larger tech companies or they themselves would build themselves up like that."* (Social accountability sector organisation representative)

5.4 Effectiveness and progress to date

This section discusses what progress Integrity Action has made towards its strategic objectives of Achieve, Amplify and Convince, and to what extent is Integrity Action is on course to achieve them by September 2024. The inter-relationship among Achieve, Amplify and Convince was explained by an Integrity Action staff member: the results of the local programmes are *Achievement*, which is necessary to *Amplify* and scale up and before *Convince* tries to get others to take it on. The following sections deal with each of the strategic objectives.

5.4.1 Progress in achieving strategic objectives

Achieve

The first strategic objective is related to the effectiveness of projects at local level and states "Achieve results for citizens that maximise quality, sustainability and inclusivity." This will be achieved through (Integrity Action, 2021) (Integrity Action, 2018):

[11] For more information, view https://www.rise.org.ua/

- incentivising institutions to fix at least 50% of problems identified by citizens
- enabling even the most marginalised citizens to act as monitors and benefit from monitoring
- working with partners to develop evidence-driven, contextualised pathways for sustained and inclusive citizen-centred accountability.

One of the key indicators for Achieve is the fix rate[12], which indicates the ability of citizens to improve projects and service delivery effectively. Since 2019, over 7 500 problems have been logged, of which 77% were fixed, which is well above the targeted fix rate of 50% (DevCheck Website). There has been a strong improvement since 2019 despite the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic (see Figure 5 which displays Integrity Action's cumulative fix rate since 2013).

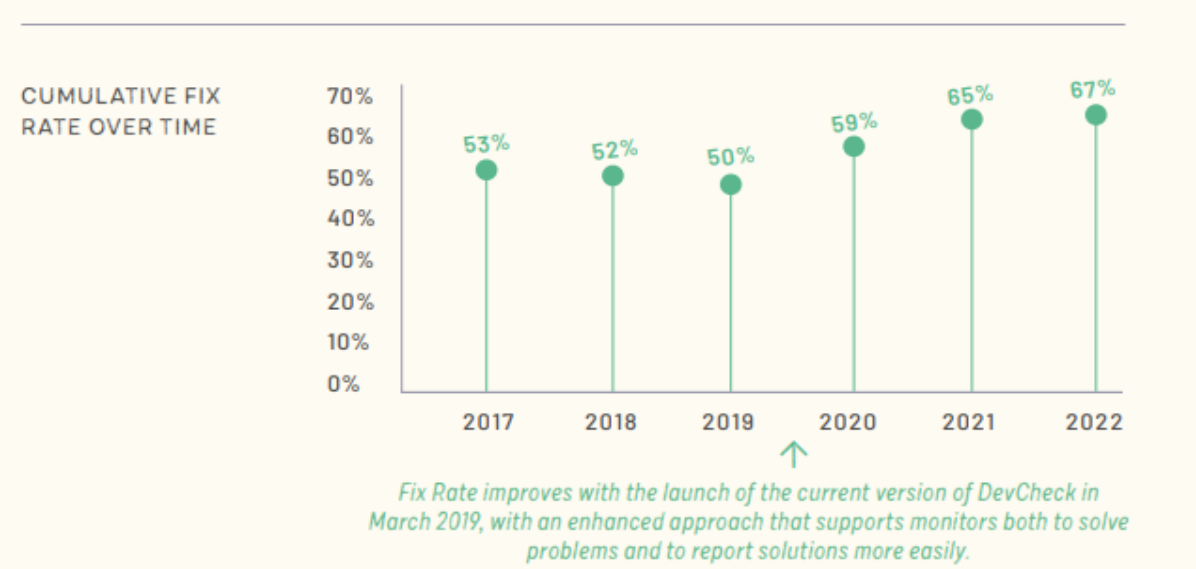

Figure 5: Improvement in fix rate since Covid-19 pandemic (Integrity Action, 2022)

(Source: Integrity Action's Annual Report 2021–2022)

The fix rate improved with the launch of the current version of DevCheck in March 2019, with an enhanced approach that supports monitors both to solve problems and to report solutions more easily (Integrity Action, 2022).

The fix rate is broken down into categories of common problems. Figure 6 shows that the fix rates are particularly high in addressing problems of delays in projects (81.2%) and not enough resources and capacities (79.7%), while it is lower on the lack of information to communities (71.3%).

[12] DevCheck records every problem that monitors identify and if and when each problem is fixed. The fix rate is the proportion of problems identified that have been addressed or solved to the satisfaction of the community and monitor. It is expressed as a percentage and calculated: (no. of problems solved/no. of problems identified) x 100.

PROBLEM CATEGORY	FOUND	FIXED	FIX RATE
Safety issues	726	523	72%
Low quality or incorrect resources	812	592	72.9%
Poor maintenance	1402	1071	76.4%
Not enough resources or capacity	2019	1610	79.7%
Lack of information to community	711	507	71.3%
Problems with accessibility or inclusion	666	518	77.8%
Project is delayed	368	299	81.2%
Impact to surrounding environment	840	657	78.2%

Figure 6: Fix rate categories (*DevCheck website*)

The fix rates are particularly high (over 80%) for the VOICE and M4FS projects in Kenya and Ghana.

> *"Currently, 93% of all identified issues with projects being monitored have been resolved. This is the best government responsiveness rate we have documented especially given that this has run for just two years. In my 18 years as a staff of [partner organisation] there has never been any such project with this level of government responsiveness."* (Partner organisation representative)

The project partners have other project objectives (trust building and platform use training, etc.) beyond the fix rate, including awareness-raising training of duty bearers and project management committee members, training of integrity values to youth, trust building between citizens and duty bearers and creating a platform for engagement etc. All the partner organisations interviewed reported that they had met all or most of their objectives.

> *"Yes, I would say we achieved all the objectives of the project because one of the objectives was to inculcate integrity values in the young generation, which we felt we achieved through students monitoring and ensuring successful infrastructure projects within their schools. It also increased students' awareness of their responsibility to ensuring the success of projects and also improved their discipline. There was also a reduction in the number of strikes at schools."* (Partner organisation representative)

In terms of capacity development, investment in training and awareness raising – including on how to request documents such as budgets from officials to ensure they have evidence when demanding accountability – has contributed to raising community members' confidence to engage with contractors and local government, including by community members who do not usually assume that role based on their gender, age or abilities. In the words of one partner:

> *"Before, it was not easy to see a woman speak to male in a public space. Now, with the training that they received and the awareness for the whole community, women have been very activities in monitoring project, raising concerns directly with contractors, as*

well as to the local authorities. With the Integrity Action project, we have also started working with people with special abilities, supporting them to be productive members of the community as community monitors." (Partner organisation representative)

Enabling the most marginalised citizens (women and people with disabilities (PWD)) to act as monitors and benefit from monitoring is the cross-cutting priority for Integrity Action. Integrity Action has seen levels of inclusion rise among monitoring groups, with currently a slightly higher proportion of female monitors (50.4% – 300 females out of 595 monitors)[13], which exceeds the target of 50%.

"We also ensured that there was a gender balance within integrity clubs, by constantly monitoring the number of girls and boys present. Kilifi is known for having a high number of school dropouts, especially among girls. We therefore ensured that girls took up leadership roles within integrity clubs, to improve the school retention rate." (Partner organisation representative)

There is a higher proportion of monitors who are PWD, which demonstrate that Integrity Action's methodologies are accessible for them. A higher number of identified projects also address construction barriers for PWD to access schools.

"Schools also 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 as well. This improved their confidence and participation in the clubs." (Partner organisation representative)

The evidence from previous project evaluations, namely, the Students Acting for Honesty, Integrity & Equality (SHINE) (Silver, et al., 2022) and VOICE (all carried out in 2021–2022) showed that there have been attitude and behaviour change in monitors. The findings from this mid-term review are in line with these outcomes as discussed in the following chapter on emerging outcomes of this report. Monitors have experienced an increase in confidence and motivation. From the supply side of accountability, the evaluations indicate that contractors and local government authorities have become more responsive, effective and trusting of the monitors. These findings also align with this mid-term review, demonstrating the value of citizen-centred accountability in improving trust, empowerment and services (Integrity Action, 2022).

Overall, there is evidence from the evaluation that Integrity Action has followed through the implementation of its Gender and Social Justice approach (2021) by prioritising locally led development agendas, the inclusion of traditionally marginalised groups in its programmes and continuous learning in its work.

Amplify

The next strategic objective is to "collaborate to *Amplify* results, fuel further innovation and embed citizen-centred accountability." This is achieved by:

[13] See DevCheck accessed 27 February 2023.

- working with partners to sustain and scale up CCA approaches, testing them as they go and evidencing results
- taking learning and insights from collaborations, feeding into future R&D and sharing widely to stimulate improved CCA practice globally
- being agile with tech developments to ensure efficiency, accessibility and local adoption of tools.

This strategic objective focuses on scaling up Integrity Action's methodology, approaches and tools. Integrity Action staff member interviewees agreed that achieving Amplify had been challenging because of being a small team. However, by being adaptive and changing to focusing on partnerships, it has been able to take certain initiative to scale.

> *"Our adaptive capacity is relevant here. Previously we were leading on programmes and primarily managing grants. We have now moved to partnerships which are looking at higher level of outcomes and at a bigger scale. Our work with PARI and SALGA in South Africa where we are reaching 12 municipalities is an example."* (Integrity Action organisation representative)

By enhancing the accessibility of monitoring data, Integrity Action has generated insights valuable to duty-bearers, civil society and the accountability sector, which has contributed to amplifying its impact and expanding uptake of citizen-led approaches (Integrity Action, 2022). Partner organisations and duty bearers continue to embed and apply parts of the approaches once projects have finished.

> *"An example is the educational authorities in South Kivu who are looking to embed the approach of integrity clubs across all their secondary schools."* (Integrity Action organisation representative)

Social accountability sector organisations praised the function of the real time data provided by citizens as encouraging the positive cycle of responsiveness.

> *"This real-time data is being fed both ways: It is fed to identify the problem but also fed back to the public to report where the improvements were and who made them, etc. Your chances of getting at a positive cycle of responsiveness is higher because you're not just providing the information of things not working, you are also providing feedback back to the public. And so what it does is 2 things: it encourages citizens to keep monitoring because you're starting to see improvements even if they're small, but it also encourages the service providers to actually improve things because they're saying 'oh we are actually being recognised for making these improvements."* (Social accountability sector organisation representative)

As an example of being a learning organisation and shifting its thinking, Integrity Action abandoned the view that DevCheck is the only answer when it comes to applying technology in its approach. The organisation now focuses on the role of technology rather than the role of DevCheck in underpinning its methodology. Deep listening and reflection with partner organisations about technology have resulted in Integrity Action supporting organisations such as KYGC in Kenya in transitioning its monitoring to Kobo to ensure sustained use.

The recent change in the funding climate globally has been one of the main barriers for implementing Integrity Action's strategy. Major Integrity Action funders (such as Department for

International Development (DFID), now Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office or the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation) changed funding priorities, which meant ongoing projects could not be continue or be scaled as planned. This particularly impacted on the organisation's ability to expand its progress under *Amplify*.

> *"We were about to hit the peak of achieving results and impact, but then the project came to an end. Schools in adjoining districts were interested in getting involved with integrity clubs, as they saw the progress schools in our districts were making. This would have meant that the project would be replicated and scaled across more districts in Nepal, however because the project came to an end, we could not do this."* (Partner organisation representative)

One partner reflected on the challenges for Integrity Action to *Amplify* due to the size of its team and how it is interchangeable with the strategic objective of *Convince*.

> *"For the strategic objective of AMPLIFY they are challenged by being a small organisation – there is a challenge in scaling as a small organisation. There is a challenge in how they influence outside of the niche organisations of social accountability. How known are they and what is their name recognition?"* (Partner organisation representative)

Convince

The third strategic objective is to "build a robust case for mainstreaming citizen-centred accountability to inspire its mainstreaming." This objective implies uptake of citizen-centred accountability by other stakeholders. This objective will be achieved by:

- leading on evidencing the economic, environmental and social case for citizen-centred accountability
- building or supporting coalitions to call for the mainstreaming of citizen-centred accountability at the global level and within countries
- convincing influencers and institutions to demand citizen-centred accountability.

Although, *Amplify* and *Convince* are mutually reinforcing, it can at times be difficult to keep them apart.

> *"Each of the three strategic words have Convince and quality and you need to Convince to scale if you are going to be transformational. The quality of their research and their coms is very good but not as known as should be."* (Partner organisation representative)

Integrity Action is considered a thought leader within the field of citizen-centred accountability. This is evidenced by the request for Integrity Action to partake in dialogues and speak at conferences and other relevant global events, e.g., OGP local government working groups. Furthermore, its research and knowledge has been quoted by field builders interviewed for this evaluation who consistently involve Integrity Action in strategic debates about the future of citizen-centred accountability, the importance of public participation and approaches to successfully localising development work. This is mainly because of Integrity Action's learning being practical and built on experiences of citizens themselves. Recommendations are tangible, which is appreciated in the immediate transparency and accountability and wider development sector.

While the initial localisation debate was challenging for Integrity Action (being based in the UK and far from implementation), it encouraged it to reflect on the value add it brings, besides methodologies and tools.

> *"I have used Integrity Action as a standard bearer of ways of rethinking how power in organisations is devolved i.e., whenever we have had looked at new ways of funding. They also challenged themselves on e.g. why there're funded, what they're funded to do which has been quite at the forefront of the way UK organisations have been doing. My interaction with Integrity Action has been around the fact that they have been thinking ahead about how to move devolution of power to citizen. Core example of an organisation rethinking their purpose and actually doing it while a lot of others theorise only. They stand out."* (Social accountability sector organisation representative)

This reflection led to an expansion in research and learning. Integrity Action started a strategy of commissioning research alongside project implementation (i.e., INTRAC/Kwame Nkrumah University of Science & Technology (KNUST) research on whether community monitoring leads to public financial savings with SEND Ghana), which not only confirms that it is a learning organisation but it is a notable step towards becoming a thought leader combined with the appropriate dissemination strategy.

Integrity Action has also built coalitions such as the coalition with Twaweza in Tanzania and budget coalition in Nigeria, where stakeholders have come together to refine thinking about social contracting and how citizen accountability belongs. This led to the research paper, *From Social Contract to Social Compact*, which was published by the Transparency and Accountability Initiative (TAI) and shared and commented on by many relevant stakeholders.

The scope and nature of *Convince* has changed over the last couple of years from the importance of the centrality of CCA to how can CCA have enhanced impact.

> *"I think convincing or influencing institutions to demand citizen-centred accountability has gone a lot more smoothly than we anticipated it. We assumed in the beginning of our strategic period that this will continue to be a battle. We don't find that we have to CONVINCE people anymore about the centrality of CCA. It is more about convincing them that the knowledge we have and the approaches that we have can help them on that journey of centralising the voices and agencies of citizens in what they are doing. It is more about how to have more impact. For example, how can we go from public sector to different NGOs."* (Integrity Action organisation representative)

Another example of the achievement of the *Convince* strategic objective is the use in Nepal of the developed Integrity Action and Campaign for Human Rights and Social Transformation (CAHURAST) reference book and scorecard.

> *"The development of the Integrity Action reference book is now used at national level, introducing the curriculum and integrity and accountability. Provincially it is still used by the various education units across the districts. During the monitoring we developed a score card (Colour scale, red (bad), yellow (average) and green (good) and score board. This maps out indicators such as school attendance by teachers and students, condition of the library, access to water, etc. Every month the integrity club comes together to discuss the progress the schools have made. This has also increased accountability within schools."* (Partner organisation representative)

Through demonstrating achievements and building evidence, Integrity Action has created a lot of enthusiasm about its approach. The merger with Crown Agent is also an indication of Integrity Action's ability to *Convince*. Crown Agent's motivation for the merger was its interest in using Integrity Action's approach and methodology in its other development projects as well as the capability of the Integrity Action staff.

5.4.2 Enablers and strengths of strategy implementation

Interviewees identified the following strengths and enablers of Integrity Actions strategy implementation. Besides the capacity building, CCA, monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) and providing technical tools, Integrity Action was commended by its partners for being proactive in its communication and for taking time to listen. Furthermore, the organisation was praised for letting the partners take the lead on the ground and for not micro-managing them. Partners also appreciated the regular learning through case studies and reporting. Partners considered the relationship and decision-making to be truly participatory, collaborative and reciprocal.

> *"The collaborative relationship we have with Integrity Action and the fact that we work and reach consensus on any decision we make is a strength."* (Partner organisation representative)

> *"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 had had a very great relationship with them and have always had consensus in making decisions."* (Partner organisation representative)

Having strong partners with many years of experience and fostering open relationships based on co-creation and mutual learning was identified as an enabler for progress towards *Achieve*. For *Amplify* and *Convince*, the network creation was considered key.

5.4.3 Barriers and challenges

The following discussion reflects on some of the barriers and challenges faced by Integrity Action and partners and identified by interviewees.

First, Covid-19 not only affected local programme implementation, but it also affected the funding climate as certain funds were transferred to address initiatives that mitigated Covid-19. For example, Integrity Action had a very large programme led by Restless Development, which was supposed to take Integrity Action's methodology to another three countries. This did not happen as DFID terminated the entire grant.

One partner organisation was, however, affected by the end of the funding from the donor.

> *"We did meet the project objectives, but it was cut in its prime. We were able to prove elements of what we set out to do, and we were able to provide really nice examples. The initial design had been about proving ourselves through phase one, in order to secure phase 2, and we did that. We would have secured phase 2, had the funding not ended, and so we're confident that we were on the right path to success, and we saw some early wins but we didn't get everything unfortunately."* (Partner organisation representative)

Second, the localisation agenda meant that, for example, the United States Agency for International Development structured its allocation of resources to prioritise local organisations as leads and where INGOs such as Integrity Action could only partner.

Third, the whole deteriorating economic, social and security situation in the world means that the higher cost of living has made citizens even more vulnerable. It also means some decision-makers on a country level have got distracted instead of focusing on CCA. Furthermore, it means that Integrity Action's funding is more restricted than it had envisaged at the beginning of the strategy.

Fourth and linked to above is the effect of climate change, which means that, for example, trained monitors residing in dry regions move away from the programme areas and new monitors need to be recruited and trained.

Other challenges partner organisations raised include that the network signals are weak and hence it is difficult to apply technology and transport monitors as some monitors live far from where the project is implemented although monitors are meant to be recruited from those communities. Also, for the SEND project, it has been difficult to monitor national awarded projects that are implemented locally such as Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund).

> *"Awarding of some district/community level contracts at the national level with contract management responsibilities not resting with district assemblies. This made it a great challenge to monitor most of the GETFund projects."* (Partner organisation representative)

5.5 Emerging outcomes

First, this section discusses the outcomes achieved by Integrity Action and partners in target countries and the specific contribution made by Integrity Action as perceived by evaluation respondents. This discussion focuses on Integrity Action's strategic focus on *Achieve*. Thereafter, the section discusses Integrity Action's value add at the global level, which aligns with the other two strategic areas, *Amplify* and *Convince*.

5.5.1 Integrity Action is achieving intended outcomes in-country.

Monitoring and evaluation data confirms that Integrity Action's partnership work has brought great value to the countries, specifically sub-national regions where projects have been implemented. The model has proven effective in creating change in both Integrity Action's supply and demand side.

Integrity Action's partnership work in target regions has led to positive changes in citizens, institutions and the way in which these groups engage with each other. There is evidence that the ToC intended outcome, "*citizens constructively demand integrity"* is being achieved. Several immediate changes contribute to this result, as discussed below.

Evaluation respondents concur that **citizen monitors have gained the knowledge, confidence and motivation** to engage constructively and demand integrity from duty-bearers in their communities. The training received from Integrity Action and partners has raised people's awareness about their rights to have a say in decisions that affect them, as illustrated by the following quote:

> *"…before, the 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)

Monitors feel recognised by duty-bearers as legitimate partners as well as by fellow community members as 'watchdogs', who ensure their interests are represented; in general, projects have motivated more citizens to engage in public participation processes to demand that government promises are fulfilled and meet their needs. Additionally, Integrity Action's training in partnership with partners has equipped monitors to engage with the technical terms and procedures used to implement public infrastructure projects.

> *"…The training on the Bill of Quantities and the Bill of Rights makes us to understand some of the technical terms used by contractors. We can speak their language."* (Monitor)

Partner organisations praised the fact that school-based Integrity Clubs have brought about a sense of civic-mindedness and a solution-based mindset to the youth in engaging with infrastructure delivery in their communities. For example, students from an Integrity Club in Kenya sought and obtained the support of a private donor to build a borehole at their school that was out of water due to local water shortages.

> *"These integrity clubs are moulding students to become responsible citizens."* (Partner organisation representative)

This is considered a positive outcome in the context of Integrity Action's solution-based and citizen empowerment approach, where citizens take more responsibility for their own development while demanding governments deliver on the promises made.

Another example of citizen empowerment is monitors in Kenya coming together to form a local community-based organisation (CBO) to address local development issues independently of the support from Integrity Action's partner, KYGC. These examples illustrate how trained monitors have developed knowledge and confidence and used them to claim power and shared ownership for their own development.

The emphasis on including women and PWD has translated into tangible benefits for those populations: for example, in Kenya, school classrooms have been built with ramps to ensure accessibility for people with different mobility. Government officials in Ghana indicated that the diverse perspectives brought in by an inclusive monitoring group have influenced how projects are designed to respond to the diverse needs of residents. This example illustrates how Integrity Action's work in partnership with local organisations is enabling local infrastructure projects to follow more citizen-centred design principles that are more likely to meet citizens' needs.

All interview respondents agreed that Integrity Action's work with partners has **enhanced the transparency and accountability** of local government authorities. The combination of effective information technology, functional platforms and relationship building enabled by the project has fostered openness and shared ownership of the planning and management of local infrastructure development projects in target communities. Both *positive* and *negative* incentives have been created.

Reliable, live and regular data is a key example of a *positive incentive*. Government officials have found that monitors' **data is valuable** and **assists them in performing their duties more effectively** and efficiently.

Government officials appreciate that monitors understand the necessary technical details of public infrastructure project development and management (such as budget monitoring, construction

materials and qualities among others), and trust their reports are reliable. Officials report using community monitoring data not only to oversee contractors' work but also to discuss the progress of infrastructure projects in official meetings with regional authorities.

Community monitors are seen to provide additional on-site monitoring capacity, especially in instances where government officials are overstretched and unable to control the work done by contractors as frequently as required. Integrity Action's partners and monitors agree that 'real-time data' and 'visual evidence' add credibility to its reporting and have made duty-bearers more likely to act quickly to verify reports and demand the resolution of faults.

Additionally, monitors believe their work is assisting institutions to manage construction contracts more effectively by inculcating a 'payment-for-results' ethos in the way local authorities manage projects, which ensures more control over funds and less wastage.

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

> *"It also reduces monitoring and supervision cost for me as an engineer since they are always monitoring and will call me when there is an issue. They are a great complement to my work."* (Government official)

Integrity Action and its local partner, SEND Ghana, have commissioned research to establish whether community monitoring translates into public money savings. While the findings from this study are not yet available, the mid-term review provides anecdotal evidence that community monitoring may have a monetary value in savings to affected governments.

More intense engagement and questioning from community monitors and other members mean that government officials and contractors are increasingly exposed to higher-level authorities with a risk of negative consequences as illustrated by the quote below. This acts as a *negative incentive* for them to follow the rules and delivery on their promises.

> *"…Now the local government has fear of delayed projects because they know if the reports/complaints of the communities are escalated to authorities, it will prompt the auditor general to follow up on the issue..."* (Monitor)

In this way, regular feedback and evidence from monitors has contributed towards **institutions that are committed, permitted and have the capacity to respond to citizens' demands**, confirming the achievement of another intended outcome from Integrity Action's ToC.

Most evaluation respondents reported that local **government institutions have become more responsive** to the needs and demands of community members after implementing Integrity Action's partnership projects. They provided examples of how projects are built of higher quality (better and more durable materials and structures) because of the monitoring and oversight work of trained residents.

Integrity Action's work with partners has enabled access to functional engagement platforms and more fruitful working relationships between monitors and local government officials based on trust and mutual incentives. In Kenya, one government official explained how being a member of the local community monitoring WhatsApp group serves as an early-warning system on infrastructure projects' progress which allows him to take "*corrective measures early*".

Representatives from all target countries interviewed provided examples of how effective citizen monitoring and trust building with local government authorities has contributed to improved local governance. In Kenya, one of the project sub-counties has been praised by the national government for successfully implementing local infrastructure projects. In Nepal, the rich data gathered by community monitoring in deep rural areas has incentivised authorities to reach out and engage with communities, despite the accessibility challenges.

Integrity Action's model of social accountability anchored in civic technology and trust building with duty bearers continues to prove positive outcomes for citizens, duty bearers and good governance in target countries.

5.5.2 Integrity Action's global work: *Amplify* and *Convince*

Integrity Action's strategic objectives under *Amplify* and *Convince* are to grow its positive impact in societies by scaling up its reach into more communities through strategic R&D and partnerships and inspiring others to adopt community monitoring approaches in their work. Because both strategic objectives are tightly linked and mutually reinforcing, they are discussed together.

This review has confirmed that Integrity Action has made great strides towards achieving its 2018–2023 strategic objectives of *Amplify* and *Convince*, despite the difficult funding climate experienced over the period, as discussed above. The **merger with Crown Agents** is possibly the **most notable effort** in this regard.

Being a larger development organisation with more staff and development projects, Crown Agents offers Integrity Action the possibility to deploy its model at a much larger scale and pilot the mainstreaming of citizen monitoring across multiple projects in various development sectors. This approach was well received by Integrity Action global partners since it offers an exciting prospect for the growth of citizen-led accountability globally and it shows commitment to the scaling agenda through an innovative vehicle focused on synergies and partnerships rather than simply growing staff and overheads.

Part of *Amplify* is to deepen the breadth and depth of benefits for citizens in target countries. 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. Both VOICE and SEND Ghana partnerships have involved an element of engagement with the national government for improved service delivery and the request to address specific bottlenecks. Interviews with local partner organisations and field builders for this evaluation confirm a need to prioritise this multipronged approach even further. Existing efforts to take the model to scale have already been designed in new projects; for example, the partnership initiated with the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and the Public Affairs Research Institute (PARI) in 2022, with funding from the European Union, to enhance public participation and improve planning oversight of public service delivery across 12 municipalities in six provinces across the country. The project follows a research-based adaptation, which will be another exciting opportunity to test the appropriateness of Integrity Action's civic technology working at scale.

Aligned to *Amplify* is Integrity Action's commitment to using **research, learning and development as a key strategic mechanism**. During the period under review, the organisation has committed to budgeting to commission research alongside each of its project grants. The purpose is to explore how to respond to a specific research question that may come up during project implementation but may require more investigation; ultimately, the organisation would like to grow its knowledge base

and build the evidence to encourage model uptake within the sector. Examples include the research from 2021 titled, *What makes frontline duty bearers act with integrity?* and *Solving problems in public service delivery.* This type of work positions Integrity Action as a thought-leader and 'go-to' organisation in the field as confirmed by representatives of sector organisations interviewed for this evaluation.

The **active dissemination of knowledge produced** is part of *Convince*. The evaluation found evidence of the fruits of this work; for example, both OGP and Hewlett TPA organisational strategies have included Integrity Action input on explicit references to the critical role of social accountability. Integrity Action staff reported other examples of the organisation's influencing capacity, which include 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. In the corporate sphere, Integrity Action is advising Anglo American on how to improve its relationship with mining communities through more effective communication and feedback mechanisms.

Lastly, the evaluation confirms the active role Integrity Action plays in pushing the localisation agenda forward, as discussed in Section 5.2.4. One such example is the organisation's repeated participation in Bond's Future Dialogues initiative, which explores new trends in the international development sector, including equitable development, the future of the aid system and new funding opportunities. The organisation was praised for its proactive and innovative approach to localising its work.

> *"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 social accountability model have been strengthened and are being recognised with increased interest and collaboration requests.

5.6 Sustainability

This section of the report assesses the extent to which Integrity Action builds sustainability in its work, the likelihood of monitoring activities and positive outcomes being sustained beyond Integrity Action support, and perspectives on opportunities for replication and scaling of Integrity Action's work.

5.6.1 To what extent does Integrity Action build sustainability in its work?

There has been growing appreciation and efforts within Integrity Action to ensure sustainability both internally and externally, particularly work being done in partnership with local organisations across the targeted countries.

Interviews with Integrity Action staff members indicate that over the past few years, the organisation has intentionally explored ways to grow in a sustainable way. Conversations around fundraising and organisational stability have been at the fore of this process (Integrity Action, 2022b). Key sustainability concerns have been largely centred around the extent to which Integrity

Action can expand its geographic footprint and partnerships in its current size and fundraising capacity. The perception is that the organisation's current size and configuration impedes its expansion (Integrity Action, 2022b). Therefore, Integrity Action's merger with the Crown Agents group is viewed as an essential route to its growth, scalability and sustainable development.

> *"Last year, we started very deep conversations around sustainability and scalability with our board. Our current size is negatively influencing our scale. We really want to take our work to many geographies and more partners. We are thinking about how we can grow our scale in a way that's sustainable. We have been looking into various options and joining efforts with a much larger organisation has emerged as one of the key routes."* (Integrity Action organisation representative)

Similar to ensuring organisational sustainability, Integrity Action also emphasises sustaining its work on CCA mechanisms. The organisation commissioned an in-depth study primarily focused on how to make CCA mechanisms last.[14] This study was largely informed by perspectives of stakeholders in the social accountability, open government and civic technology sectors as well as feedback from CSOs, government officials and citizens taking part in some Integrity Action supported projects. This study demonstrates Integrity Action's commitment to ensuring that its CCA work is sustained beyond its support.

Furthermore, all Integrity Action staff interviewed discussed the various efforts to support local partners to sustain citizen-led social accountability work beyond Integrity Action support. At least three Integrity Action staff cited context analysis and understanding of partner needs as a key enabling factor for sustainability.

> *"We have improved a lot over time in terms of building sustainability in our work. We do context analysis upfront and have discussions about this and what would be sustained. We also started to look beyond programming design and cost of monitoring but understanding who else needs to be engaged. For example, SEND engaged government at a higher level."* (Integrity Action organisation representative)

The evaluation also found that Integrity Action is actively working on putting in place appropriate exit strategies, particularly around the continued use of mobile data collection and information technology (Integrity Action, 2021). While the DevCheck technology is highly appreciated, some interview participants raised concerns about its sustainability, feeling that they could not sustain its use beyond Integrity Action involvement. The high cost of setting it up at local level was perceived by some respondents as unattainable and beyond the reach of most CSOs. Therefore, as part of its exit strategy, Integrity Action has been introducing Kobo as an alternative tool for citizen-led monitoring.

> *"In terms of technology, we have DevCheck and its going to end at some point, so mid-way through projects we shift to Kobo with idea that at the end of the programme, they already have a tool they can use without us."* (Integrity Action organisation representative)

[14] https://integrityaction.org/media/12393/integrity-action-sustainability-research-briefing-note.pdf.

> *"When we were finalising the partnership with Integrity Action, our biggest worry was the Dev check platform because it would have been costly to set it up for us. However, they were able to help us explore other options and we now use Kobo, which is a free platform and they trained us on it. They left us with something before we ended the partnership."* (Partner organisation representative)

5.6.2 Extent to which citizen monitoring activities and outcomes will continue post Integrity Action support

The evaluation findings show a high likelihood that partner organisations will continue supporting citizen monitoring activities in their areas of implementation. Some of the activities that will continue include building the capacity of new monitors and community stakeholders, supporting integrity clubs in schools and using technology to monitor. For example, SEND Ghana is exploring ways to either sustain the use of DevCheck post the project in March 2023 or possibly mapping PowerBI to Open Data Kit (ODK) to perform similar functions as DevCheck.

> *"Monitoring activities will continue. We have built the capacity of monitors and community stakeholders and they will drive the monitoring of projects even after the project. Their awareness of their rights has been raised, the trust between them and duty bearers has been strengthened and most importantly they know that this is in their interest."* (Partner organisation representative)

In addition to this, there was consensus among evaluation participants indicating that they would continue to use Integrity Action's tools, methods and systems to support their social accountability work even after grant support from the organisation has ended. For example, interviews with representatives from KESHO Kenya show that the organisation has borrowed a lot of lessons from the SHINE project, particularly the community-led approach. This community-led approach has been used to inform the design of its new PAMOZI for Inclusive Education project focused on demanding accountability and transparency on policies affecting children with disabilities. This is not an Integrity Action funded project.

Similarly, CAHURAST-Nepal learned to link human rights to technology using DevCheck. As a result, the organisation has gone on to develop its own Economic, Social and Cultural Rights mobile data collection application (ESCR), which it uses for one of its European Union funded projects. These examples clearly indicate the usefulness and relevance of Integrity Action's tools and strategies, a key enabler for their sustained use.

> *"Our partnership ended in 2022, however, we are still using the Integrity Action tipping point strategy because we have other projects that are also focused on economic, social and cultural rights. The strategy has enabled us to innovate within these projects."* (Partner organisation representative)

Evidence also indicates that partner organisations are also establishing key partnerships as sustainability mechanisms for continuing citizen monitoring work at the local level. For example, SEND Ghana has identified key groups with an interest in monitoring projects in the target community. On the other hand, KESHO Kenya has built a partnership with Kenya's Ethics and Anti-corruption Commission (EACC) as a way to sustain existing integrity clubs and establish new ones in schools. The following quotes substantiate these claims.

> *"We identified groups such as people living disability and women's groups to continue monitoring projects in the communities. PWDs have an interest in how construction is done and whether it meets their needs while women's groups have an interest in how health projects meet their needs."* (Partner organisation representative)

> *"Monitoring activities will continue because we were intentional about collaborating with stakeholders from the start as a sustainability measure. The Ethics and Anti-corruption Commission are continuing with the work that we have been doing with integrity clubs."* (Partner organisation representative)

Interviews with citizen monitors also indicate a high degree of ownership and appetite for continuing to monitor projects in their community. There is an appreciation of the importance of this work in the community and monitors see the community as a key shareholder in development processes.

> *"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)

> *"We have worked on several projects as monitors, so we have established a rapport with the Assembly and the experiences we have obtained, and the rapport bodes well for continued monitoring and sustained responsiveness from the Assembly."* (Monitor)

Another interesting finding is that in Kenya, KYGC has supported a group of monitors to register Kinango, a CBO that serves as a platform for community members to voice their concerns, share information and participate in decision-making processes related to local development initiatives. Kinango also provides a mechanism for community members to hold their leaders accountable for using public resources and implementing development projects. This will enable the monitors to carry on with monitoring construction and service delivery once Integrity Action funding elapses.

An assessment of interview data also shows that the sustainability of positive outcomes generated from Integrity Action supported projects is largely dependent on community ownership and buy-in from government officials and community leaders, such as teachers. For example, integrity clubs have been seen to be more effective in areas where there is a high level of buy-in and support from government and schools.

> *"There are at least 56 schools where integrity clubs were established but only 26 of those schools have active integrity clubs and the majority of these schools are in Melamchi district where the government was more accepting of the work of integrity clubs."* (Partner organisation representative)

Support required to continue with citizen monitoring activities

Evaluation findings reveal that to support the continuation of monitoring activities in the communities, Integrity Action and partner organisations need to consider the logistical needs of monitors working in the targeted communities. It is worth noting that the monthly stipend offered to monitors is particularly helpful in terms of covering communication and transport costs. Monitors who were interviewed also expressed that if monitoring through information technology is to continue, partners and monitors will require mobile phones that are compatible with open-source

applications such as Kobo. However, Integrity Action reports having seen successful monitoring continue through paper-based reporting in resource constraint settings and/or partners.

Furthermore, a few respondents also mentioned the importance of refresher training as a key enabler for the success of citizen-led monitoring.

If not adequately addressed, these issues pose as threats to the sustainability of effective citizen-led monitoring activities and resulting outcomes.

6 Case studies

6.1 Case study 1: M4FS project in Ghana

Overview of M4FS project and context

The Monitoring for Financial Savings (M4FS) project has been implemented by the partnership between SEND Ghana and Integrity Action since 2021 in West Gonja and Yendi Districts, in Northern Ghana. The project capacitates citizens to monitor the delivery of infrastructure projects in their communities to ensure quality and timely construction that meets their needs.

Data shows that nearly a third of infrastructural projects started at the sub-national level are never finished (INTRAC, 2021). Lack of accountability is perhaps the single most important factor for failures in delivering projects on time and within budget (INTRAC, 2021).

The M4FS project promotes CCA as a means to improve the performance of public infrastructure projects. This includes supporting citizens to engage with projects at the point of delivery and to influence decisions made about their implementation. The project builds on SEND Ghana's long record of promoting good governance and gender equality in Ghana since 1998. The M4FS project works through District Citizens Monitoring Committees (DMCs), which SEND set up to ensure community participation in the delivery of public infrastructure and services in target communities. DMCs' representatives engage with the designated local government representatives at the district level (District Assemblies), which select the projects to be monitored and receive the monitors' feedback once the monitoring is underway. Trained monitors are then able to engage constructively with duty-bearers in platforms they could not have accessed in the past.

For the M4FS project, community monitors are selected from existing DMCs or SEND Ghana's network of CBOs. Selected monitors are then trained on Integrity Action's electronic monitoring tools that enable rapid collection, storage and live viewing of data onto DevCheck, Integrity Action's mobile application and online mapping tool. Training provides monitors with skills to identify problems and find solutions, as well as methods for identifying and engaging with key stakeholders such as local authorities, contractors or NGOs.

Project progress and value add

Since its inception, the M4FS project has recruited and trained 40 monitors across 10 communities in two target districts, who have monitored the construction of 15 infrastructure projects, primarily in the health and education sectors. Figure 7 below lists the range of issues identified by monitors and the rate at which issues have been resolved. Overall, the project has achieved great success in improving the effective and timely delivery of much-needed infrastructure in communities and ensuring universal accessibility.

PROBLEM CATEGORY	PROBLEMS FOUND	PROBLEMS FIXED	FIX RATE
Not enough resources or capacity	117	108	92.3%
Safety issues	89	82	92.1%
Low quality or incorrect resources	102	95	93.1%
Problems with accessibility or inclusion	60	56	93.3%
Lack of information to community	29	27	93.1%
Project is delayed	39	32	82.1%
Poor maintenance	19	17	89.5%
Impact to surrounding environment	20	18	90%

Figure 7: Fix rate of problem categories for SEND Ghana

Source: DevCheck (20 February 2023)

During the evaluation, SEND Ghana representatives and community monitors discussed infrastructure projects often lacking resources or team capacity to implement. Committed funding for district-level projects frequently does not flow as expected leading to approved projects stalling.

Such factors affected the M4FS project implementation. Monitoring of a District Assembly-approved project could not begin in one instance because the national government delayed the release of funds. While engaging in discussions and advocacy on a national platform to address bottlenecks in the medium term, in the short term, the organisation was able to adapt by expanding to other projects and sectors not originally planned. Similarly, after the first quarter of citizen monitoring, SEND Ghana realised that some monitors did not fully understand the process of identifying faults, reporting and advocating for solutions; refresher training was then provided to reinforce and clarify concepts.

Importantly, the M4FS project has resulted in several important changes at various levels.

M4FS monitoring data (SEND Ghana, 2022) and evaluation interviews concur that the training and official accreditation monitors received have capacitated them to identify problems with infrastructure and further to raise them with the appropriate officials. In other words, trained **monitors have learned new knowledge and skills** and have **developed the confidence** to demand quality infrastructure delivery from public officials in their regions.

> *"We are able to talk to district assembly officers freely, and without fear or intimidation. We feel empowered."* (Monitor)

Figure 8 below [15]depicts rates of awareness, satisfaction, and relevance (need) by people in target communities as collected by project monitors.

[15] The total number of people surveyed includes people who have taken the survey more than once, because people's perceptions can shift throughout the course of a project; 40% of survey responses are from unique respondents.

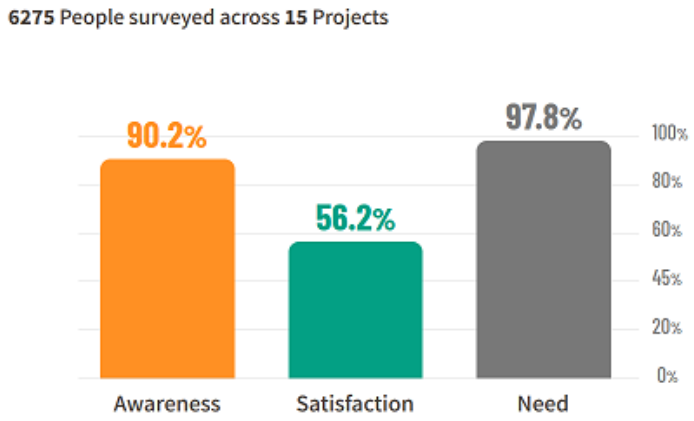

Figure 8: Community perceptions of projects monitored by Integrity Action programmes in Ghana

Source: *DevCheck (20 February 2023)*

All evaluation respondents agreed that the project has **improved the transparency and accountability** of public sector decisions that affect them. Through their participation, community monitors have gained access to the District Assembly, and are now aware of the planning and management of infrastructure development projects in their communities and can use the forum to hold its representatives to account.

> *"With this M4FS project and through the usage of photographs and technology, the assemblies respond quickly because they feel they will be exposed if they don't."* (Monitor)

There is some evidence from project narrative reports and evaluation data that monitors' input is well received, and **duty-bearers have become more responsive** to the needs of communities. Government engineers interviewed appreciated the input from community monitors as complementary to their work. Through their regular monitoring, monitors alert engineers to any issues on site, so that these can be taken up with contractors early in the construction process.

> *"We averted a potential degradation of the classroom block we monitored…when we observed that the cement blocks being used for the foundation was not strong. We brought it to the attention of the engineer, who instructed the contractor to change it, and use stronger blocks for the foundation. Without our monitoring, this would not have been prevented. Even though we are not artisans and do not have content knowledge in construction, the basic training, SEND-Ghana and Integrity Action provided helped us in our monitoring work."* (Monitor)

Additionally, monitors believe their work is assisting District Assemblies to manage construction contracts more effectively by inculcating a 'payment-for-results' ethos in the way District Assembly representatives manage projects, which ensures more control over funds and less wastage. The evaluation did not come across robust evidence to this effect; however, it is hoped that the Integrity Action- and Send Ghana-commissioned research on whether community monitoring contributes to public finance savings will shed some light on this largely under researched area.

Integrity Action's contribution

As the INTRAC-KNUST inception report indicates, research findings do not always support citizen monitoring as a mechanism for improved project performance and service delivery. The report suggests that a multi-pronged approach to improving public sector performance, combining bottom-up with top-down approaches and targeting multiple issues, may produce better policy outcomes (INTRAC, 2021).

As previously discussed, SEND Ghana has a long trajectory of promoting good governance and effective service delivery by institutionalising community structures that undertake monitoring. Integrity Action's specific contribution is, according to SEND Ghana's staff, a "strengthened capacity of SEND Ghana to undertake infrastructure monitoring" and "the use of technology to facilitate the process". While SEND Ghana has used mobile data collection technology (i.e., ODK) since 2010, interview respondents indicated that capacity for real-time data collection and data processing is still needed.

It could be argued that the combination of Integrity Action's agile and efficient information technology and SEND Ghana's solid experience and reputation in good governance and budget advocacy have proved a winning combination contributing to M4FS project's high success rate.

Looking forward: sustainability

SEND Ghana and community representatives interviewed were confident that the changes the project brought about will sustain over time now citizens know their rights and the quality of infrastructure delivery they are entitled to. Monitors have also learned how to engage constructively with local authorities and have been recognised by duty-bearers and fellow community members. The incentive to continue monitoring activities is therefore clear.

However, receiving monetary compensation (for travel and data) is important for monitors to continue with monitoring because they are volunteers. Should this compensation end, it is unclear whether monitoring would continue with the same frequency and intensity.[16]

Lastly, because Integrity Action's information technology played such an enabling role in the project, SEND Ghana is interested in incorporating the M4FS model across other projects and is actively building this component into upcoming funding proposals (i.e., conducting education circuit monitoring through working with school management committees). SEND Ghana and Integrity Action are exploring options for monitoring using mobile data collection tools to continue once the project has ceased. Several options are being explored (including the use of open-source data analysis technology) but proper continuity still needs to be finalised.

Lessons learned and recommendations

For SEND Ghana, the M4FS has cemented the idea that building trust between citizens and authorities and empowering communities to participate is a corner stone for increased responsiveness of duty-bearers and good governance.

[16] This concern regarding sustainability has been raised in previous evaluations (Integrity Action's 2016–2020 SIDA Grant, Mid-term Evaluation) and is therefore, well known to Integrity Action.

Recommendations emerging from the M4FS project include the following:

- **Moving beyond infrastructure monitoring.** Consider building in capability for monitoring service delivery as a complementary activity to infrastructure monitoring. These two services combined have the potential to substantially improve governance and the lives of citizens.
- **Scaling.** Support the growth and replication of the project to other districts and regions in Ghana. The project has been well received by citizens and government officials alike and many other districts in the country could benefit from citizen monitoring.

6.2 Case study 2: VOICE programme in Kenya

Overview of VOICE programme and context

Kwale Youth Governance Consortium (KYGC) and Integrity Action has been implemented the Visibility Openness and Integrity through Community Engagement (VOICE) Programme since 2018.[17] Integrity Action and KYGC co-designed the current phase of the VOICE programme spanning April 2022–April 2023.

The programme is implemented in Kwale County in Kenya. Kwale county is the former Coast Province with an estimated population of 866,820 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Since 2022, the county has had six sub-counties, namely Matuga, Msambweni, Kinango, Lunga Lunga, Samburu and Shimbahills and 20 wards. Kwale County is one of few counties that has devolved to village structures with 77 village administrators in place to make government accessible to communities. Every Village Unit is managed by a Village Administrator who oversees any project implementation in the village together with a Project Management Committee (PMC) consisting of community selected members (Beryl Consult Limited, 2021).

The programme focused on the health, education and water sectors, specifically functions that are devolved considering that the county government is perceived to be closer to the citizen. The community members interact with these three sectors on a day-to-day basis and are considered critical in enhancing the well-being of the communities, especially women and children in Kwale County. Communities in Kwale are meant to benefit from new infrastructure like clinics, schools and water sources, paid for by local and national government; however, often these projects do not start or their structures are sub-standard. Before the implementation of the VOICE programme, citizens were less concerned about project implementation and it was common for contractors to pay citizens to look away when they delivered low quality projects. Duty bearers would often not know how to intervene or address the problem.

> *"Many times, when the project committee identified a problem, they are given some token (monitory and non-monitory) by the contractor to silence them. Sometimes the duty bearers would not address the concerns raised by the community or rather due to limited knowledge of the community, the duty bearers would side with the contractor."* (Partner organisation representative)

[17] Two additional partners were originally part of the VOICE programme from 2017–2019, after which one partner dropped out (October 2019–March 2022) and an additional partner dropped out for the current phase April 2022–2023, leaving KYGC as the only local partner.

The VOICE programme aims to contribute to improved transparency, participation, accountability and performance of public services and infrastructure projects in Kwale.

The goal of the VOICE programme is to contribute to "Greater transparency, participation, accountability and overall performance of public services and infrastructure projects in Kwale benefitting all sectors of society, including the most marginalised".

The current programme has four objectives (Integrity Action, 2022):

- **Objective 1:** To enhance participation of communities in budget making and implementation.
- **Objective 2:** To enable communities get first-hand experience in public participation and use the experience to demand for implementation/review of the public participation policy framework.
- **Objective 3:** Citizens/communities are able to influence decision-making and service delivery by demanding accountability.
- **Objective 4:** To embed and sustain the impact of the programme.

Monitors are selected by their community and trained by KYGC with support and funding from Integrity Action to monitor local infrastructure and services related to health, livelihoods, education, water and sanitation. They report problems using the DevCheck mobile app. They then engage constructively with key stakeholders to get the issues addressed, and when problems are fixed, this goes live on the app too. The VOICE programme aims to improve how county authorities, including village administrators and other duty bearers, listen to and respond to citizens' concerns on services and infrastructure.

Project progress and value add

Since 2019 to March 2022, the VOICE programme has recruited and trained 152 monitors[18] (52% are females) who in turn have monitored 185 projects, (DevCheck) primarily in health and construction sectors in four sub-counties (only two sub-counties since April 2022).

Figure 9 below lists the range of issues identified by monitors and the rate at which issues have been resolved.[19] The project has been more successful in fixing problems with accessibility or inclusion (87.9%) and impact to surrounding environment (87.3%) than lack of information to community (68.8%). The average fix rate is 82%.

[18] These figures from DevCheck reflect VOICE 2 phase which ran from 2019 to March 2022. KYGC was one of two partners for this phase, alongside KCNRN, whose monitors (and their problems/fixes) are included in the data. In VOICE 2 KYGC trained 84 monitors, which is included in DevCheck, and in VOICE 3, it trained and worked with 20 monitors who are not included in DevChek.

[19] This is up until March 2022.

Problems & fixes

PROBLEM CATEGORY	PROBLEMS FOUND	PROBLEMS FIXED	FIX RATE
Lack of information to community	272	187	68.8%
Low quality or incorrect resources	328	271	82.6%
Impact to surrounding environment	142	124	87.3%
Safety issues	517	427	82.6%
Not enough resources or capacity	437	356	81.5%
Project is delayed	302	258	85.4%
Problems with accessibility or inclusion	99	87	87.9%

Figure 9: Fix rate of problem categories for VOICE Kenya.

Source: DevCheck (18 February 2023)

Figure 10 below[20] shows rates of awareness, satisfaction and relevance (need) by people in target communities as collected by monitors.

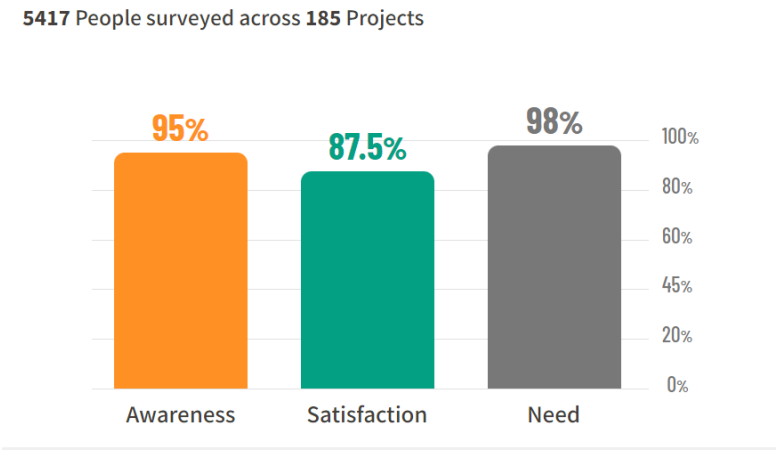

Figure 10: Community perceptions of projects monitored by Integrity Action programmes in Kenya.

Source: DevCheck (18 February 2023)

The evaluation team identified four key outcomes flowing from the VOICE programme, which all interviewees fully agreed on. First, the programme has **enhanced transparency and accountability** of public sector decisions that affect the community members.

> *"The VOICE project has contributed to increasing transparency because we involve members of the community in every step of the planning. In terms of accountability*

[20] The total number of people surveyed includes people who have been taken the survey more than once, because people's perceptions can shift throughout the course of a project. An estimate of 55-60% are unique respondents.

contractors in particular have improved how they work because they understand that the community is watching." (Village administrator 2)

As a result of the programme, communities have seen disciplinary action taken against an engineer after they reported sub-standard work done by contractors.

"Through this project we have seen a sub county engineer given a compulsory leave after more than three committees reported poor work done by various contractors in Kinango Sub County and the reports issued by the sub-county engineer were contradicting with the issues raised by the committees." (Partner organisation representative)

Contractors have been forced to fix faulty work which otherwise would have put school children in danger.

"When Mwangani school was being constructed, in the foundation, there was a slop, in one side, they did not compact properly. So, we called the contractor, at first, he did not want to fix the issues, but we showed him the requirement in the BQ, and we insisted by raising the issues with the village administrator who intervened and got the contractors to fix the foundation. If we were not there, that school was going to be built with a faulty foundation putting our kids in danger and using our budget poorly." (Monitor)

Second, the programme has seen an **enhanced working relationship between village administrators and communities** in the areas where the project has been implemented**.** It was reported that initially the village administrators did not engage with the community and were often accused of only servicing their relatives. The village administrators have improved the way they engage the community in budget planning.

"Local authorities now listen to us, they know that the work we are doing is for the benefit of the community, so we have good relationship with the authorities. This is important because now we have projects that we are proud of and we have seen increased in quality of the projects that are being implemented in our village. When the community is asking questions, it is not seen as working against local authorities. We ally not enemies. That is good for social cohesion." (Monitor)

Trust has been built between the village administrators and monitors. A number of times during the evaluation, it was reported that the village administrators find the data provided by the monitors valuable and useful. Examples were reported on how they use the data for reporting to county officials or as evidence to hold contractors accountable.

"One day, I was in a meeting with county officials, they needed a progress report on a project during the meeting, and I called one of the community monitors to give me details. Which I shared to the officials because I trusted that the information, I was getting by phone was accurate. The data we get from the community monitors are valuable as they help us keep contractors on track and allow us to solve problems early." (Village administrator 1)

In Kinango sub-county, the monitors have included the village administrators on their WhatsApp group, and they also share their data on Kobo which is the localised development technology tool.

> *"We have a WhatsApp group where Kinango Community Monitors share information. This allows me to be aware of any issues emerging in our project and take corrective measures early. I use the data collected by the monitors in my reports for the sub-county. I use the data to get evidence before talking to contractors when there are issues."* (Village administrator 2)

Third, there is **improved civic awareness and mobilisation and better understanding of the citizen role in the governance process**. It was reported that citizens are increasingly interested in being involved in public participation processes, including the PMC and budget forums (PMC refers to project management committees whose role is to oversee implementation of the infrastructural projects) in their communities. In the past, this was not the case mainly due to limited awareness of governance processes.

> *"More people are attending the budget forums, which means, more community members are aware of projects we are implementing. There is more accountability."* (Village administrator)

> *"We have community members that are trained and aware of their roles in improving governance. We have seen more community members being interested in selecting projects for the sub-county."* (Village administrator 2)

In terms of inclusion, the project has empowered female monitors to speak up about problems identified with contractors and local authorities. In the past, it was rare for women to speak to men in a public place. Since working with Integrity Action, KYGC has also started to empower more PWD as monitors.

Fourth, and linked to sustainability, **community monitors in Kinango have established a CBO** with members that have been trained and are committed to continue following up on projects implemented in their sub-county. The CBO serves as a platform for community members to voice their concerns, share information and participate in decision-making processes related to local development initiatives. It also provides a mechanism for community members to hold their leaders accountable for using public resources and implementing development projects.

In short, local authorities are more transparent and open. They hold budget forums, discuss priorities with communities, follow up with the contractors when issues emerge, and address questions asked by the community. The community is more confident to ask questions as they know it is their right. They are engaged in projects funded and implemented by county government, and they suggest projects and priorities. The contractors are more considerate towards the community members as they know they are dealing with informed citizens 'who speak their language' due the training in bills of quantity, hence contractors deliver better quality projects.

> *"When you look around in Kinango, we have less white elephant projects in our community. All the new projects are constructed with purpose and with durability in mind due to the vigilance of community monitors. Now the local government has fear of delayed projects because they know if the reports/complaints of the communities are escalated to authorities, it will prompt the auditor general to follow up on the issue. There has been a massive change. Before the VOICE project, PMC were not even selected, you will wake up one morning and find a project being implemented already. Now, contractors can't start work without a community monitor. There is more*

communication between communities and village administrators since we started monitoring with the VOICE tools." (Citizen monitor)

Overall, these outcomes have contributed to **alleviating key governance-related problems in Kenya** as its county level, local government has improved its performance and has become more effective in delivering services to the community.

"The VOICE project has helped improve my performance as a village administrator as the projects implemented in my village units are being implemented correctly and to high quality standard." (Village administrator 2)

It was noted that the Kinango sub-county has received recognition and praise nationally for its implementation of government projects and for its emphasis on openness, transparency and accountability through the help of the monitors. This is significant as it contributes to the successful achievement of objectives of the devolution strategy of bringing service delivery and duty bearers closer to the people.

"We have increased performance in our project delivery. Kwale County managed to become number 2 in the whole country in terms of performance." (Village administrator 1)

Integrity Action's contribution

Integrity Action's main contribution and value add to KYGC's work was identified as the capacity building, the approach of training and creating awareness in the community and hence building confidence to get contractors to follow project requirements and supporting and alerting village administrators of problems. Integrity Action shares its experience and supports the projects with practical tools for community engagement in governance.

KYGC identified Integrity Action's proactive communication and deep listening skills, letting KYGC taking the lead, and regular learning through case studies and reporting as key enabling factors for successful implementation of projects.

Other enablers for the achievement of the outcome included community awareness of its role and rights (bill of rights training) on holding authority accountable; access to information (bills of quantity) and increased knowledge on projects and the tender process; and finally empowering locals to follow up and monitor projects. The current strategy of devolution has also been an enabling factor for the VOICE programme.

A number of barriers to programme achievement were identified. First, the deteriorating economic, social and security situation in the world has meant a higher cost of living which has made citizens even more vulnerable; monitoring a project becomes a luxury as they have more pressing needs. Second, the current drought in Kinango as a result of climate change means that, for example, the younger trained monitors residing in dry regions move away from the project areas.[21] Third, the network signals are weak in Kwale so it is difficult to apply technology. Fourth, transportation of

[21] There is, however, always more than one monitor in each area and since KYGC has inculcated a spirit of volunteerism which has encouraged other community members to support the monitors, hence there has been no need to recruit and train new monitors.

monitors is costly as some monitors live far away from where the project is implemented (although monitors are meant to be recruited from those communities).

Looking forward: sustainability

PMCs[22] are meant to be community groups that have an oversight role of all public funding projects. Often, they are co-opted by the contractors or the authorities and may be paid to turn a blind eye or they are unaware of their roles and responsibilities. Integrity Action had the approach of duplicating the structure or bypassing PMCs by having a range of working groups and modelling how they could do better. Over time, monitors have been selected for the PMCs. Integrity Action and KYGC have also provided direct training to PMCs and to the village administrators. This is an example of *Amplify* and sustainability where accountability structures have improved that can continue beyond the VOICE programme.

There is uncertainty within KYGC and Integrity Action about when a project is complete and whether VOICE has a role to play once construction becomes maintenance. This could also affect the sustainability of the projects that have been monitored.

Lessons learned and recommendations

As identified by KYGC in its Year 3 report, it is easier to reach wider masses by training the PMC than by just training monitors although it is easier to train monitors as they have a background in social work. Trained PMCs and monitors work well together. Monitoring of health service delivery is more complicated than monitoring construction projects as there are numerous health guidelines.

The following recommendations have emerged through this evaluation. They are addressed to range of stakeholders, including Integrity Action, KYGC, the Government of Kenya and other funders:

- Scale the programme to other sub-counties.[23]
- Increase the training of PMC members and duty bearers.[24]
- Consider the role of the VOICE programme once construction becomes maintenance.

[22] They only exist during the project implementation period and once the project is complete, the committee is dissolved. For county government funded projects, there are no clear laws on how these committees are to be identified or how they are expected to execute their mandate.
[23] This recommendation is also part of recommendations that KYGC is making to key stakeholders in Kwale through its advocacy work.
[24] This recommendation is also part of recommendations that KYGC is making to key stakeholders in Kwale through its advocacy work.

7 Conclusion

Integrity Action has made impressive progress in achieving its strategic objectives over the period 2020–2024. Under *Achieve*, the organisation's flagship metric, the 'fix rate', stands at 77% across all supported projects, which is well above the target of 50%. Additional objectives at the project level, including capacitating citizen monitors, building trust across groups and creating effective platforms for engagement, are all materialising. Projects are becoming increasingly inclusive, with increased participation of women and PWD.

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 in playing an active role in the planning and implementation of infrastructure projects in their communities. Live data collected through accessible data collection platforms and shared via effective communication channels 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 projects in target communities.

At the global level, the evaluation found that 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. The upcoming merger with Crown Agents holds the promise to substantially scale up Integrity Action's work and trial a mainstreaming approach through the spectrum of development interventions. Integrity Action is also well positioned to remain relevant in the eyes of donors as the localisation trend in international development takes hold.

Organisations operating in the fields of social accountability and open government believe Integrity Action has carved out a niche position that adds unique value. Highlights of the model include the hands-on practical application of a citizen-centred accountability model, the unique way of combining citizen feedback and appraisal, the use of the 'fix rate' to monitor and communicate impact, its innovative use of civic technology and tools and the constructive way of engaging with the government that may enable Integrity Action to work in contexts where other organisations may struggle due to the closing of civic space. Although parts of Integrity Action's methodology can be found in approaches used by other organisations operating in the social accountability, open government and civic technology fields, it is perceived to be packaged in a unique way. As such, none of the interviewees that contributed to this evaluation saw Integrity Action duplicating the work of other actors in the sector.

Lastly, the evaluation found that Integrity Action has been intentional about putting in place sustainability mechanisms in its work at both institutional and project partner level. 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 played a key role in facilitating the institutionalisation of its tools, approaches and systems within partner organisations.

The sustained use of DevCheck or equivalent technology by local partners post-grant funding still needs to be addressed.

8 Recommendations

This section provides various recommendations for Integrity Action to consider to strengthen the implementation of its strategy. Recommendations were generated by considering what actions Integrity Action should *stop*, *start* or *continue* doing. No activities were identified to stop or to start from scratch, but a number of Integrity Action's existing practices could be built on, adapted or prioritised.

Progress 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 (i.e., participatory learning tools, gender analysis skills, youth mobilisation and engagement techniques, policy cycles, budgeting and budget monitoring, 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 role of advocate and amplifier, through active participation at relevant forums such as the ongoing renewal of OGP's strategy (Open Government Partnership, 2022).
- 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.

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Annexure 2: Planned versus actual data collection

Table 2: Full breakdown of planned versus actual data collection

Stakeholder Group	Method	Planned data collection	Actual data collected	Comment
Sphere of control				
Integrity Action staff	Group interview	1	1	
	KII	3	3	
Sphere of influence				
Partner organisations	KII	7	7	
	Group interview	3	3	Group interviews conducted with the KYGC (VOICE programme) Kenya and SEND Ghana (M4FS programme) teams were also used to inform the two case studies.
	Sense-making session	2	1	Due to diary clashes and lack of availability of possible participants, the two sense-making sessions were merged into one joint sense-making session; nine participants took part in the joint sense-making session.
Citizen monitors/ programme beneficiaries	SSI	6	6	Interviews with citizen monitors were used to validate outcomes for the two case studies in Kenya and Ghana
Key role players	SSI	7	6	Unable to make successful contact with one role player to secure interview.
Funders	SSI	2	2	
Sphere of interest/concern				
Government officials	SSI	4	4	Interviews with government officials were used to validate outcomes for the two case studies in Kenya and Ghana