

CTAP Phase 1

Lesson Report



About CTAP

COVID-19 Transparency and Accountability Project (CTAP) is an initiative that seeks to promote accountability and transparency through the tracking of COVID-19 intervention funds across 7 African countries - Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone.

CTAP is sponsored by Conrad Hilton Foundation and Skoll Foundation and executed by BudgIT Foundation, Connected Development and Global Integrity.

Global integrity is a learning-centered organization that connects frontline actors and global players to help them navigate complex governance challenges with a systems change mindset. Global Integrity aims to support locally-led efforts to solve governance-related challenges and that public resources are used effectively, to deliver public services and meet people's needs.

Researchers: Jorge Florez, Carlos Díaz, Yeukai Mukorombindo
With the contribution of CTAP Country Partners:

Nigeria - BudgIT: Iyanuoluwa Bolarinwa, Gabriel Okeowo
Connected Development (CODE): Busayo Morakinyo, Pearl Utuk.

Cameroon - Action for Development and Empowerment (ADE), Nancy Saiboh

Kenya - Slums Information Development and Resource Centers (SIDAREC), Eve Nicole

Malawi - FollowTheMoney Malawi, Sharon Kalima

Ghana - BudgIT Ghana, Ray Nkum

Liberia - BudgIT Liberia, Abraham Varney, FollowTheMoney Liberia

Sierra Leone - BudgIT Sierra Leone, Alhassan Sesay

Creative Development: Michael Pabiekun

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Introduction

Two years ago the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak challenged our societies in significant ways. It required governments to act quickly to avoid the spread of the virus, to keep our economies and health systems from collapsing, and to generate alternatives to shelter those more vulnerable for economic, social, or physical reasons. Countries reacted as best as they could given the resources they had and those that they could get from donors. The main guidance provided by donors to governments at that point was to spend quickly and do what it takes, but to keep the receipts about the use of the money, in order to balance action while also preventing mismanagement, waste, and corruption. Right now evidence is showing us that this guidance was far from enough.

The pandemic and the need for a swift response placed a heavy burden on the existing institutional structures for accountability and service delivery. This situation created opportunities for existing corrupt networks to inappropriately capture benefits that were meant for those that really needed them and also exposed service delivery systems to pressures that they were not prepared to handle. The context remains gimm, with slow and unequal vaccine access

and roll out, as well as with low citizen trust in government institutions providing a fertile ground for misinformation and vaccine hesitancy. Additionally, corruption and strain in government service delivery capacity is having important effects on citizens' enjoyment of rights and access to services, and on the levels of inequality and public debt. We are yet to realize the full extent of the consequences of the pandemic in our economies, our governments, and our societies.

The Covid-19 Transparency and Accountability in Africa project (CTAP) was created early on in the pandemic as a civil society-led effort to demand transparency and accountability (T&A) about the use of public resources in response to COVID-19 Africa and to advocate and advance the reforms needed by governments in the region to ensure effective use of public resources and quality service delivery for citizens. The BudgIT Foundation, Connected Development (CODE), Global Integrity and country partners in 7 countries (Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone) have spearheaded this project combining different approaches:

- Gathering and disseminating data about



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international, regional, and local donations to governments in Africa, as well as internal resource mobilization in or 7 focus countries (see our website here).

- Conducting research into the ways in which governments are using public resources to respond to COVID-19, assessing how they have used these resources, and what actions they are taking to ensure transparency, accountability, and effectiveness (see research reports here).
- Tracking service delivery to raise citizens' voices and awareness about what they are entitled to and how their governments are delivering these services (see more on this here).
- Building local coalitions to fight corruption and waste, and to promote governance reforms that enable citizen engagement, ensure proper and effective use of public money, and demand corrective actions as needed.
- Promoting innovative ways to catalyze citizen mobilization and create opportunities for multi

stakeholder collaboration that can generate and implement solutions to the problems that hinder democracy, enable corruption, and diminish government effectiveness.

This learning report summarizes the CTAP journey since the inception of the project and delineates the way forward for our joint African initiative. It's important to note that CTAP has become more than the sum of its parts enabling us to dive deep into the experiences of our country members as well as to distill lessons and reflections that are useful to inform future advocacy and collaboration efforts across Africa. In the following pages we will begin by briefly presenting our country members and their work, then we will share lessons and reflections from the work across countries. In the third section we will share stories from the work in each country, and we will finalize the report with conclusions and thoughts on next steps for the initiative and for transparency and accountability work in the continent.



Who are the CTAP Country Members?

Nigeria

CODE & BudgIT have long been engaged in civic organizing with governments to track budgets in Nigeria and throughout the continent of Africa. In November 2020, BudgIT & CODE announced the launch of the CTAP project, and in July 2021 BudgIT and CODE launched the COVIDFund website, a pan-African online platform for tracking COVID funds received and donated in Africa. In addition to implementing CTAP in Nigeria, CODE and BudgIT hosted a conference discussing the Nigerian government's Covid-19 public programs, highlighting transparency gaps and weaknesses in the context.

The Nigeria CTAP story discusses 3 main lessons that CODE and BudgIT have learned from their previous experiences in using civic tech and data to promote accountability and applied it to the CTAP project in Nigeria and beyond.

Cameroon

Actions for Development and Empowerment (ADE) is a non-profit, grassroots, and youth-driven organization founded with the aim of empowering citizens, especially young people, to hold government accountable to its service-delivery obligations through informed demands. ADE is currently spearheading the

local chapter of the Follow the Money (FtM) in Cameroon. ADE launched the CTAP project in Cameroon in February 2021 and has since convened a diverse range of local stakeholders to facilitate collaborative action for improving the state of Covid transparency in the country.

The CTAP Cameroon story shares insights for pushing Covid-19 advocacy in a context filled with political tensions, as well as local authorities, civil servants, and citizens who are reluctant to speak up

Ghana

BudgIT Foundation started operations in Ghana in September 2019 and today BudgIT Ghana is coordinating the implementation of the CTAP project in Ghana. In March 2021, BudgIT Ghana officially launched the CTAP project and has since convened a diverse range of local stakeholders to engage in immersive discussions on how Ghana can build a resilient PFM that enables the government to deal with the pandemic response in a more open and accountable manner.

The CTAP Ghana story shares insights on leveraging relationships and working with other local institutions as a way to strategically scale the Covid-19 advocacy agenda across the country

Kenya

Slums Information Development & Resource Centers (SIDAREC) is a Kenyan grassroots communication NGO operating in three major informal settlements in Nairobi. In addition to being the lead country partner coordinating the implementation of the CTAP project in Kenya, SIDAREC is also the lead coordinator for the Follow the Money (FtM) Kenya Chapter. In February 2021, SIDAREC officially launched the CTAP project and has been able to bring together local actors working on Covid transparency to exchange information/resources and agree to a collective advocacy agenda.

The CTAP Kenya stories describes the journey towards improving government responsiveness and prioritization of needs of essential workers and vulnerable populations through citizen awareness and by building and coordinating the capacities of multiple stakeholders to engage in Covid-19 advocacy.

Liberia

The CTAP project in Liberia is implemented by a coalition led by BudgIT Liberia in collaboration with Follow The Money (FtM) Liberia, Libpedia, YARD-Liberia, and Volunteers Hub Liberia. This coalition has collaborated to carry out research, track service delivery, and mobilize citizens and civil society stakeholders to demand effective response to COVID-19. CTAP Liberia launched in February 2021 in Monrovia and has called upon different stakeholders in the context working on Covid Transparency to disseminate research and information, network, and establish stronger relationships and ideas for future collaborations.

This story shares insights from implementing CTAP in Liberia and the successes of attracting & formulating partnerships with government

stakeholders and accountability institutions.

Malawi

Follow the Money (FtM) Malawi is the lead country partner coordinating and implementing the CTAP project in Malawi. CTAP officially launched in Malawi in March 2021. Since launching FtM Malawi has brought together civil society, media, think tanks, and human rights activists to discuss problems relating to the utilization of COVID-19 funds in the context as well as to coordinate fragmented efforts between these local stakeholders.

The CTAP Malawi story explores insights around building relationships with multiple stakeholders in order to co-create & sustain an advocacy agenda.

Sierra Leone

The CTAP project in Sierra Leone by a coalition led by BudgIT Sierra Leone, Budget Advocacy Network (BAN), and the Sierra Leone Green School Club. This CTAP Sierra Leone coalition has collaborated to carry out research, mobilize citizens, and engage government and civil society stakeholders to uncover corruption and waste, advocate for systemic reforms, and demand effective response to COVID-19.

CTAP Sierra Leone officially launched in March 2021 and since the project was launched, CTAP Sierra Leone has engaged multiple stakeholders in the context to discuss Covid-19 fiscal governance and identify opportunities for collaboration.

This story share's lessons from CTAP Sierra Leone journey towards fighting Covid corruption using interventions that go beyond legal reforms.

The CTAP Journey

Since the design of CTAP we guided our actions by principles of collaboration, empowerment, and learning. We aimed to strengthen country partners across target countries with resources, capacity building, and peer learning opportunities, so they could take effective action to empower citizens to mobilize, demand accountability, and create opportunities of collaboration with governments. The processes and adaptations that different country members had to make to be able to successfully implement the project in their countries while keeping in mind the goals of our network and the needs of citizens in their contexts. This section reflects on those country journeys and our collective cross-country lessons. These reflections will be presented in four Themes that cover the main learning questions co-created with all CTAP members:

- Navigating political and institutional constraints to understand government response to COVID-19: focusing on the way in which government response and transparency and accountability levels affected partners work

- Bringing citizen voices and concerns to the forefront: highlighting the ways in which raising citizen voices and monitoring service delivery enabled partners to create engagement opportunities and increase the salience of transparency and accountability in their contexts

- Building on and enabling the raise of a citizen movement: showing the efforts that partners made to strengthen their collaboration with relevant stakeholders in their contexts and across target countries

- Moving from research and data to action and collaboration: focusing on how partners advocated, mobilized citizens and created opportunities for multi stakeholder collaboration to improve response

Throughout the presentation of these themes we will be showcasing elements of CTAP members work in their context and distilling lessons that we will use for CTAP phase 2.



This section reflects on those country journeys and our collective cross-country lessons. These reflections will be presented in four Themes that cover the main learning questions co-created with all CTAP members

Navigating Political and Institutional Constraints to Understand Government Response to Covid-19

Sharing data on the resources that African governments received from different sources to respond to the pandemic and getting and using data about the use of these resources in target countries are key pillars of the CTAP project. These efforts to increase transparency were meant to enable CTAP members to understand governments' response to the pandemic, as well as to mobilize citizens and advocate for improved and accountable use of public resources. This strategy aimed to build on governments' commitments to open up data on spending, public procurement, beneficial ownership and to carry out effective audits about the use of major funds received from donors. Our optimism was sincere, but also cautious given the realities and experiences of our partners in their countries.

We built a resource tracker tool that enabled Africans to see the funding commitments by public sector, private, multilateral and bilateral donors to support the response by governments to COVID-19. We tracked a total of USD 62.35 billions in resources committed, and USD 5.08 billion in in-kind donations. Out of this money, we identified USD 18.61 billions in funding

commitments and USD 431.36 millions in in-kind donations for our seven focus countries.¹ This initial step in data gathering provided us with a good entry point to raise awareness about the magnitude of resources destined for response to COVID-19 and the need to demand transparency and accountability about the use of these resources and those allocated for this purpose through internal resource mobilization.

When engaging at the country level we began to see and experience the struggle to get and use data on COVID-19 funds. Most African governments have failed to effectively open up data on the use of resources destined to respond to COVID-19. There were some who shared little to no information, and there were others who shared very general and at times limited information about the resources they received from donors. Then there were those who were more open to providing additional information but not in meaningful ways. For example, the additional information provided was not usable due to poor quality, intermittent access to data, or limited information.² This lack of effective action by governments is also



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1. These amounts come from the information gathered through several data sources at the global and national levels.

2. The Nigerian federal government, through different agencies, released several information portals for citizens to get information on the COVID-19 infection rates, deaths and recovery rates. Some of the portals also provided information on money budgeted for, and spent on, COVID-19 by federal and state governments i.e. The Presidential Task Force on COVID-1979; the National Bureau of Statistics ArcGIS Platform; and the NCDC COVID-19 Dashboard see pages 21- 22 of the CTAP Synthesis Report

similar on issues related to the creation of spaces for citizen engagement in decision making and oversight of the response and – to a lesser extent – in terms of carrying out thorough audits about the use of resources.

The lack of transparency has often been attributed by governments to the need to act quickly to meet the needs of citizens and keep governments and economies running throughout the pandemic as well as to the lack of technical capacity that predates the pandemic.

External incentives have not been enough to change government practices and the fast tracking of international aid, especially anti-corruption and citizen engagement processes, while providing countries with resources has also enabled capture of resources by political and economic elites (see here and here for examples). For instance, in Malawi the auditor general confirmed the misuses of 80% of the resources allocated for COVID 19 response. Other reports find that most African governments have used COVID-19 response to clamp down on political opponents and close civic space, and highlight that these restrictions have been especially hard on media applying major restrictions between June 2020 and June 2021, and decreasing the use of these restrictions after June 2021.³



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3. See here (P.68)



Additionally, the response to the pandemic and the issues of mismanagement, capture, and waste in this response has heightened inequality and have a negative effect in health and education service delivery. The Mo Ibrahim foundation highlights that Sub-Saharan African countries in 2018 spent on average 1.9% of their GDP on health, which is well below the global average of 5.9% and the Goal set by African countries to spend 15% of their GDP to continuously improve access and quality of healthcare in the continent. This continued underspending in health hindered progress in access to and quality of healthcare, leaving countries also unprepared to handle the pandemic and has also increased the impact of the pandemic in citizens.

These findings were further corroborated by research reports published by CTAP country partners that the health institutions and overall the individual country health sectors were not adequately prepared to respond to the pandemic due to chronic underfunding.⁴ The effect of the pandemic in education and in the already weak social protection networks in the continent, has led to an increase in inequality and worsened the situation faced by vulnerable groups. CTAP published a research report titled the Unintended impact of COVID-19 on Vulnerable groups documenting the physiological, psychological, economic, social and professional impact of COVID-19 on private school teachers during the

COVID-19 lockdown in 2020.

It's also important to note that the resources received and mobilized by countries will have an important effect in local economies affecting their public debts and the capacity they have to invest in recovery (Ghana and Kenya are two of our target countries that will likely face debt related challenges in the short term). The CTAP research reports also explored the effect of the pandemic on the economy, foreign trade, the labor market, unemployment and tax as justification and explanation for why government pandemic response plans included funding for social and economic programs aimed at reducing the impact of the informal economy and low income communities.⁵

The effects and consequences of the pandemic have also been increased due to the challenges for effectively getting and administering vaccines to citizens in Africa. The mostly delayed delivery⁶ of covid vaccines to African countries paired with the challenges faced by governments to effectively deliver the vaccines they have got and vaccine hesitancy among citizens, makes it hard to see how African governments can double their efforts and reach at least 40% of the population - the goal in 2021. This situation will have an effect on delaying social and economic recovery and increasing the toll on vulnerable groups.



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4. See Covid-19 Incidence and Resource Management in Cameroon ; Malawi Covid-19 Incidence and Resource Management Report; A research report on Covid-19 Incidence and Resource Management in the Republic of Kenya ; Country Analysis Covid-19 Incidence and Resource Management Report in Liberia ; Country Analysis Covid-19 Incidence and Resource Management Report in Sierra Leone

5. Ibid, Covid-19 Transparency and Accountability in Nigeria and Beyond: An assessment of the Emergency Fund Management System

6. See page 15



There have been some bright spots in vaccine delivery (see for instance the experience in Ghana) and there are plans in motion to ramp up vaccination efforts, increased commitments for access to vaccines, and efforts to produce more vaccines in Africa. Nevertheless, if efforts to increase vaccination are to be successful there is a need to address important challenges in primary health care that were heightened by the pandemic (see service delivery tracking on the issue in Nigeria) and make important efforts to strengthen citizen trust in government through transparency, participation, and accountability.

Our CTAP research has highlighted these issues, including the transparency and accountability weaknesses, instances of mismanagement in each of the countries, and the effect of these instances in vulnerable

groups (see our research for this issue in Nigeria). The country contexts in which our partners are working have called for the diversification of strategies to get and use the information to enable citizen mobilization and ensure government action.

Nigeria and Kenya were the countries that had better transparency (see here a review of the laws and facts surrounding the Mismanagement of covid-19 resources). However, in these countries there were also challenges with the availability and usability of the information. The most common challenges had to do with the limited information on governments' plans to invest the resources, limited or poor quality procurement data, and very limited data on actual service delivery and use of resources at the subnational level. These challenges were heightened across countries due to the lack of effective formal opportunities for citizen participation and

oversight on governments' response to COVID-19.

In Sierra Leone, Malawi, and Liberia, most of the available information to understand and mobilize citizens around challenges related to government handling of the pandemic response, came in the form of reports from real-time or early auditing by government accountability bodies. This meant that the information was useful to highlight instances of corruption and mobilize citizens to demand accountability, but not necessarily to address the challenges that citizens faced throughout the pandemic. In the case of Cameroon and Ghana, transparency was poor in general. In Ghana, budget reports have provided limited information and only some procurement data – for contracts funded with resources from donors – has made it to the public domain.

In Cameroon, even after successful decentralization of procurement capacity, only summary information about the way in which the national government uses public resources has been released and subnational government agencies do not disclose information claiming that they need national level approval to do so. Only late in the pandemic response, after a second loan from global donors, an audit of the use of COVID-19 funds in the country showed the mismanagement of USD 330 million.

These delays and challenges in effectively accessing and using public data to track public funds was an important obstacle at the start of the project (see here and here an overview of early findings across target countries) which required CTAP partners to implement a series of

adaptations in project implementation related to getting information, to using that information, and to creating opportunities for citizen engagement and mobilization. The details of these adaptations will be presented in the following sections, in general these adaptations included:

Diversifying research and data gathering techniques

- Engagement with government agencies at the national and local level
- Interviews with relevant staff in service delivery facilities at the local level
- Interviews with intended beneficiaries
- Review of government statements and audit reports
- Following up and engaging with media reports about irregularities and corruption
- Doubling down on service delivery tracking as a way to strengthen demands for public information

Building on findings by others to raising the salience of transparency and accountability and engaging in public debates

- Generating public statements and analysis pieces about the findings from audits and media
- Flagging risks for corruption and waste identified through our engagement with beneficiaries and service providers



It is important to highlight that interviews were largely conducted anonymously as government officials and public servants were reluctant and afraid to publicly share information. They often feared retaliation. This speaks to the existence of challenging political interests and incentives that are driving the lack of transparency and keeping information out of the public domain.

- Raising awareness about the effect of corruption and mismanagement by sharing stories of affected citizens and the struggles of service providers

Strengthening communication strategies to boost citizen engagement in project activities, public debate, and demanding transparency and accountability

- Producing infographics on government plans for response, recovery, delivery of vaccines, and other current issues and using them to engage citizen in social media
- Hosting community radio programs and podcasts as well as facebook and twitter live events to promote conversations with experts and government representatives
- Producing videos and documentaries that present the voices of affected citizens, service delivery providers, and explore particular issues such as the effect of COVID-19 in health.
- Whatsapp channels to disseminate communication products and research findings and to communicate with local CSOs and other CTAP partners to organize collective action
- Increasing the engagement of CSOs and citizens through local Tracka and Follow the

Money networks, as well as partnering with organizations with ongoing work – in the monitoring of service delivery at the local level, particularly around delivery of palliatives and primary health care.

- Hosting coalition meetings (2 per country) that enabled government, civil society, media, and other relevant stakeholders to come together to identify opportunities to address problems in service delivery response and advance advocacy for improved transparency and accountability.

It is important to highlight that interviews were largely conducted anonymously as government officials and public servants were reluctant and afraid to publicly share information. They often feared retaliation. This speaks to the existence of challenging political interests and incentives that are driving the lack of transparency and keeping information out of the public domain. This situation also made the production of videos challenging.

In general, these adaptations have delivered results for in-country multi stakeholder collaboration, generation and use of information about locally relevant issues, and demanding corrective action in response to corruption risks and audit findings. In the following sections we present more details about what the adaptations entailed and the ways in which they enabled country members



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5. Ibid, Covid-19 Transparency and Accountability in Nigeria and Beyond: An assessment of the Emergency Fund Management System

6. See page 15

Bringing Citizen Voices and Concerns to the Forefront

The promise of timely and useful data made by governments when receiving funds from donors were only partially met – if at all – by governments. This situation left our in-country members with only partial information from disparate sources that could not easily be used for data analysis and for the elaboration of recommendations based on public information about how to effectively prevent corruption and improve service delivery. We had to rely heavily on alternative approaches to get actionable information that could fuel our research and citizen mobilization work. It's also important to note that CTAP phase 1 was focused on understanding governments' response to COVID-19, on identifying challenges related to transparency, accountability, and service delivery, and on building local coalitions that could set the stage for effective action in phase 2 of the project.

The great number of questions and concerns that were raised by the massive amount of resources mobilized to respond to the pandemic and the lack of transparency in the use these resources led us to voicing these questions, engaging government representatives to seek answers, and reaching out to citizens to explore whether or not they had received the palliatives and services promised by government agencies. What we

found in practice left much to be desired. Instances of corruption, capture of resources and goods by local political elites, lack of access to essential services such as health and education, and further marginalization of local communities and vulnerable groups (see instances of these stories here) .

The methods used by CTAP members to get this information varied widely depending on the type of services explored, the level at which these explorations occurred, and the willingness of citizens and service delivery staff to speak up on government failures and challenges at the local level.

In Nigeria and Kenya, transparency – even if imperfect – enabled partners' to build on their existing capacity for budget analysis and relationships with government officials to carry out early engagement strategies about national use of public resources and complement these efforts with additional activities at the subnational level. Nigerian partners focused on assessing the effect on the pandemic in vulnerable groups and tracking primary health service delivery in an effort to demand improvements in capacity and infrastructure so as to enable effective vaccine distribution and strengthen government capacity to deal with emerging COVID-19



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variants and future emergencies. Kenyan partners decided to extend their research and engagement to the subnational level by assessing how subnational governments were using the public resources allocated to them and the extent to which the use of these resources were targeting those that needed the most.

In the additional countries, the overall lack of transparency has led partners to deploy a range of strategies specific to the characteristics of their contexts. In Sierra Leone, Malawi, and Liberia, partners choose to build on the work by accountability agencies and media, as well as to double down on engagement with citizens and service delivery staff. They built on scandals raised by audits and media to demand corrective government actions such as firing government officials engaged in corruption and changes in procedures used for acquiring medical goods

and disbursing and distributing palliatives. They navigated the confinement mandates imposed by governments to virtually and in person acquire citizen stories about service delivery and testimonies by service delivery staff about the challenges they were facing to carry out their work. These strategies have enabled partners to strengthen their relationships with other civil society organizations, create opportunities for dialogue and engagement with government agencies, and mobilize citizens around demands for improvements at the national and subnational levels. It's important to note that while audits and media scandals have in general led to some instances of corrective actions or the firing of government officials, they have not yet led to evident sanctions or recovery of funds.

In Cameroon access to public information and audit reports have been even less timely while in Ghana there are no audit results. In addition



to this, the efforts by our partners to get public information have faced challenges due to very poor responses to access to information requests and constant fear by citizens and service provider staff about reprisals for speaking up about government failures. Partners have used strategies reliant in using pieces of limited information publicly available in procurement portals and government statements to check whether these promised investments have been actually delivered. In Cameroon, claims in government statements were identified as not entirely true by on-site visits and service delivery staff interviews, while in Ghana projects in the procurement portal and project tracking tools have left many questions regarding the actual delivery of projects and goods. In addition to increased site visits and engagement with citizens and service providers to verify the use of public resources, CTAP members in these countries have relied heavily on coalition building. They have built and strengthen collaboration with other CSOs, health care workers, journalists, and youth, in order to better position themselves to demand accountability and be ready to take advantage of opportunities provided by media scandals and citizen

mobilization – such as the #Fixthecountry protests.

CTAP members' to complement – or even get – public information available at the national and subnational levels have enabled them to navigate transparency and accountability issues and to build partnerships and collaboration with CSOs and media, and to a lesser extent with health workers and government representatives. These experiences have surfaced important lessons for programming and future CTAP work:

Using a varied repertoire of actions to get and use information helps to strengthen partners' capacity. However, it comes with important costs in terms of resources and time. Country-level CSOs would benefit from factoring in these strategies from the get go to improve the use of limited resources for action.

Data is only part of the story. Even in contexts where there was some level of access to data on budgets, procurement, and audit reports, CTAP members found increasingly relevant findings and actions needed to ensure COVID-19 response and recovery investments met citizen needs.

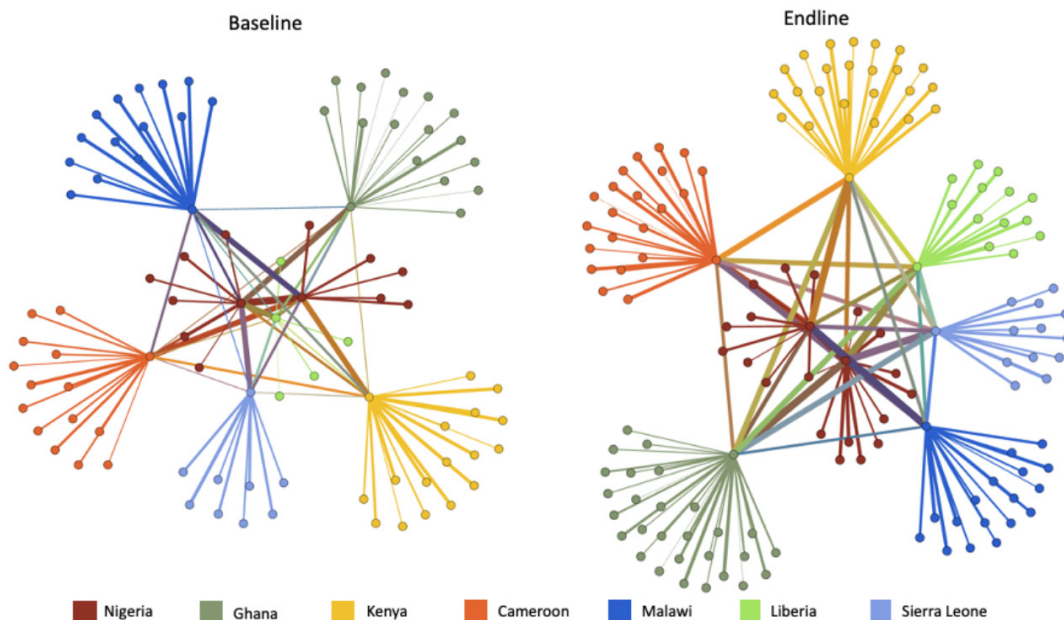


Strategic collaboration with different types of stakeholders at the local level can strengthen advocacy and engagement by providing opportunities for effective action building on others' work, leveraging efforts by others to make clearer and better asks for action, and creating opportunities for mobilization and engagement with government.

Building on and Enabling the Rise of an African Citizen Movement

CTAP partners increased collaboration and knowledge exchange moving from an initial state where their relations were mediated by CODE, BudgIT, and Global Integrity to one where it's improved coordination and sharing directly among them. This change in the strength of the relationships is represented in the thickness of the lines that connect the nodes, or stakeholders in the network, in the

graph. This has translated in collaboration for the production of multimedia content, to brainstorm solutions to challenges they are facing, and feature in each others' events as a way to inspire partners in one country with the experiences and strategies used in other countries to demand transparency and accountability about COVID-19 response and recovery.



In the graph it's also possible to see that in each country CTAP members were able to increase their networks – the number of nodes – through events, social networks and direct contact with potential partners. Overall, the CTAP network grew from an initial point of 85

organizations across the 7 countries to 131 organizations by the end of the first phase of the project.⁷ All country partners collaborated with organizations working at the national, local, and global level in their contexts, from baseline to endline

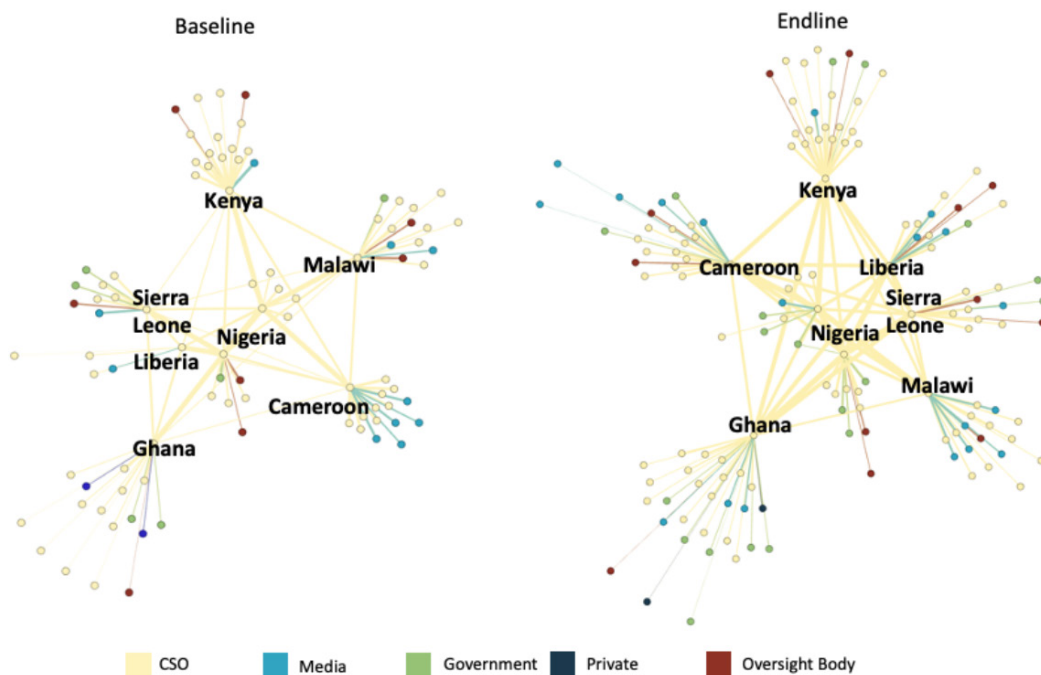


It's important to note that the approach for reaching out to stakeholders at the local and community level varied with some country members opting to directly engage with local organizations

7. This analysis intentionally leaves out community volunteers that are part of the Track and Follow the Money networks within the countries, as well as the relationships that these networks have established with local authorities. Because we did not have consistent data across the 7 countries and it biased the network.

organizations in the network working at the national level increased from 61 to 96, while those working at the local level increased from 14 to 21, and those at the global level from 8 to 13. It's important to note that the approach for reaching out to stakeholders at the local and community level varied with some country members opting to directly engage with local organizations while others built strong collaborations with national level organizations - which explains the high increase at this level - that already had strong chapters across the subnational level.

In terms of the type of stakeholders that are part of the 131 strong network at the end of phase I, civil society organizations are the most common (58%), followed by government agencies (13%), media (15%), and oversight bodies (8%). The graph below shows the difference in number and strength of relationships with different types of stakeholders. It's possible to see that all country members increased and diversified their networks while also prioritizing engagement with different types of stakeholders depending on their contexts.



The approach used by CTAP members has targeted the broad mobilization of citizens and civil society organizations, while also creating opportunities for change in government policy and practices, strengthening changes and balances, and carrying out activities to raise the salience of transparency and

accountability in collaboration with the media. The combination of these methods has varied widely depending on the capacity to engage and promote collaboration with government, building on citizen mobilization, engagement with oversight actors, and partnerships with media.

Collaboration with other CSOs was built in CTAP from the Get Go

All CTAP members implemented the project in collaboration with other CSOs or in close collaboration with networks of volunteers in the Follow the Money and Tracka networks. Cameroon, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, and Liberia were the countries that increased their CSO networks while also strengthening their relationships with them.

The priorities that these CTAP partners placed on different types of CSOs depended largely on their existing networks, approaches, and the contexts in which they worked. For instance, in Cameroon, mobilizing a wide and diverse network of stakeholders was a strategy to overcome the lack of government transparency and deal with the challenges emerging from closing civic space.

While in Nigeria and Kenya, existing relationships with existing strong civil society organizations enabled CTAP members to build on the alignment of agendas and build up strong technical and political voices that were difficult for governments to ignore. While in other countries such as Ghana and Liberia, strengthening the engagement with local partners was both a way to deal with capacity challenges and to make CTAP members stronger actors in these countries by building on and collaborating with more experienced organizations.

There were main approaches used by CTAP

members to diversify and strengthen their CSO networks:

- Partnering with other organizations for the implementation of the project, bringing them into CTAP from the get go, or throughout implementation of project activities such as research, communications, and advocacy.
- Carrying out coalition meetings both at the launch of the project and at the stage of presenting results from investigations and service delivery tracking. These meetings enabled partners to raise awareness about the transparency and accountability around COVID-19 resources, to get to know and exchange ideas with other relevant organizations in their contexts, and to identify opportunities for collaboration related to advocacy and service delivery tracking.
- Mobilizing diverse networks of local and national organizations to track service delivery around particular issues related to the response by governments to the pandemic and about the state of primary health service delivery. WhatsApp groups were very useful in enabling these types of collaborations.
- Linking COVID-19 issues with other issues relevant to specific social groups such as youth in Ghana, vulnerable population in Kenya, and people with disabilities in Nigeria. Also to issues that can have more salience in the context, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



Carrying out coalition meetings both at the launch of the project and at the stage of presenting results from investigations and service delivery tracking.

Engagement with Government Agencies

This has not been an easy task across countries, nevertheless most CTAP partners found useful ways for engaging different types of ministries and local authorities. In most cases, formal engagement with government representatives through invitation to events and formal letters provided little to no results and required important costs in terms of time and follow-up. *This led CTAP members to find alternative ways to get the attention from authorities and to create a conducive space for engagement, and to some extent collaboration with government agencies:*

- Building on findings from audits, media, or their own research to invite government representatives to explain the issues identified in those findings and discuss how the government planned to handle them.
- Creating opportunities for having meetings with government representatives to present the goals of the project and explore opportunities for collaboration. Some of these collaborations include efforts for improving transparency in the handling of resources – as in the case of Liberia – and for explaining to citizens in public spaces government programs – such as podcasts and spaces in twitter and facebook across countries.
- Engaging government representatives at different levels using narratives that can

motivate them to provide information and share their experiences, while also being cognizant of the risk that might exist in the context and factoring it through the use of anonymous interviews or no revelation of sources.

- Working with media outlets to publish stories about lack of collaboration by government representatives as a way to generate incentives for them to come forth, provide explanations for their behavior, and open opportunities for further collaboration.

Across countries, another way in which CTAP members have dealt with limited or slow response by governments has been to strengthen the engagement with legislatures, accountability bodies, and anti-corruption agencies. Engaging with this type of stakeholder has provided additional entry points for advancing transparency and accountability. For instance, in Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Liberia, and Sierra Leone CTAP members have engaged with parliamentarians in budget committees to advance public debates and revisions related to COVID-19 spending and health.

These conversations have led to the creation of opportunities for engaging government agencies, but they do have a limited pace and scope, given the procedures and limitations



For instance, in Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Liberia, and Sierra Leone CTAP members have engaged with parliamentarians in budget committees to advance public debates and revisions related to COVID-19 spending and health.

faced by parliaments in many countries. Another relevant example comes from the efforts that CTAP members in Liberia, Malawi, and Sierra Leone have made to engage accountability and anti-corruption bodies. In these cases partners have presented their agendas in ways that are aligned with these bodies in order to find opportunities for collaboration by facilitating the engagement of these stakeholders with citizens and showcasing the results of their work in ways that can be more relevant and engaging for people.

It's important to note that in their engagement with government agencies and accountability bodies all CTAP members have been direct in communicating their independent status, making clear that collaboration does not mean that they will shy away from voicing complaints about service delivery failures or instances of corruption carried out by the collaborating agencies or any other relevant actor in government.

Last but not least, CTAP members have built on relationships with media to increase the relevance of the messages coming out of their research, service delivery tracking, and advocacy, as well as to reach citizens across their countries in ways that are important to them and can more easily lead them to engage in demanding transparency and accountability. *The main approaches used to engage media have been:*

- Inviting media outlets to cover the launch

of research reports and coalition meetings, a strategy that has led to the showcasing of members' work in many newspapers and television programs.

- Providing opportunities for journalists at different levels to take part in project activities such as service delivery tracking.
- Sharing with them updates on progress, key emerging results, or positions about findings by other actors (such as accountability and anti-corruption bodies) in ways that can be more engaging for citizens.
- Participating in radio programs at the community and national levels to discuss issues related to COVID-19 transparency and accountability, how these issues affect people and provide opportunities for citizens to take action.
- Partnering with media outlets to showcase shortcomings in transparency and accountability as well as lack of responsiveness with regards to particular issues from particular government agencies or representatives.

All of these strategies have enabled CTAP members to build momentum with different stakeholders to move from raising awareness and advocating for change into generating actual opportunities for citizens to mobilize and for government reform on these issues.



CTAP members have built on relationships with media to increase the relevance of the messages coming out of their research, service delivery tracking, and advocacy.

From Research and Data to Action and Collaboration

CTAP emerged as an effort to use data and evidence to raise awareness about COVID-19 transparency and accountability, promote public dialogue about the issue, and bring about change in citizens and government action on the issue. The first phase of the project was focused on understanding the challenges and opportunities that the COVID-19 pandemic surfaced so as to enable immediate action by citizens, identify areas for reform in policy and practice, and create

opportunities for civil society and government collaboration for improving service delivery, and in particular preparedness to future crises. CTAP partners' work has turned research, service delivery tracking, and engagement with different stakeholders across our 7 focus countries into action by citizens, CSOs, accountability bodies, and government agencies.




Mobilizing Citizens and Civil Society Organizations

Overall, CTAP members did a very good job in promoting citizen engagement using both online and in-person tactics. In terms of online engagement, the making and dissemination of videos, infographics, and narratives through social networks provided citizens with an opportunity to know more about what was happening with COVID and governments' response to it, while also offering opportunities for citizens to engage in online conversations. An additional tool used by members was that of regular programs and debates in twitter spaces and other channels such as facebook and podcasts. Complementing these online activities, CTAP partners also embarked in efforts to raise awareness through community radio stations, including instances such as participating in radio programs in vernacular languages in Kenya and other countries, and to provide citizens with a channel to voice their needs and their perception about government action in videos and documentaries (see some of these videos and infographics here).⁸

The use of these different methods to raise awareness and incentivize citizen action were paired with efforts to provide options for citizens to move from voicing their opinions to taking action in tracking the use of COVID resources. These opportunities were provided to citizens across countries, most of them taking the form of recruiting and training volunteers to collaborate to existing member

networks – Follow the money networks, track networks, and networks of relevant partners – in efforts to track the delivery of palliatives, subsidies, and health service delivery. The close engagement with citizens at the community level enabled CTAP members to identify key issues related to health service delivery and other local priorities and to identify persistent narratives that contribute to vaccine hesitancy and civic passivity. These findings are informing programming for the second phase of CTAP, where the focus on health service delivery and issues related to inequality will enable members to further tailor their approaches and narratives to continue activating and mobilizing citizens around relevant issues.

Citizen mobilization, as useful and important as it is, is usually not enough for turning action and findings into successful advocacy and reform. Mindful of these, the CTAP project also sought to enable and strengthen the emergence of civil society coalitions focused on COVID-19 transparency and accountability in each focus country. The general approach used to this end was that of carrying out 2 coalition workshops (see for example these videos in Kenya and Ghana) in each country to facilitate dialogue and peer learning across civil society organizations, as well as to provide a space to analyze the findings coming from different CSO-led efforts and identify opportunities for continued action and collaboration. *Some of the most relevant*

 *Citizen mobilization, as useful and important as it is, is usually not enough for turning action and findings into successful advocacy and reform.*

8. <https://www.covidfund.africa/resources>

results from these efforts are:

- **The generation of spaces for sustained dialogue across wide groups of CSOs with complementing approaches to issues related to COVID-19:**

This includes bringing together organizations working on women's empowerment, food security, and public financial management, and youth interests in Ghana. Another relevant example is the creation of a citizen forum in Sierra Leone in which members identified shared opportunities for action and developed joint action plans to take forward activities such as producing communication pieces and advocating on particular issues relevant to vulnerable communities.

- **Taking joint action to strengthen research capacity and effectiveness in disseminating results:**

Coalition meetings in different instances enabled members to coordinate and launch activities such as joint service delivery tracking in Kenya, Cameroon and Malawi, and advocacy strategies in Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Liberia.

- **Developing wider strategies for CSO collaboration:**

In Kenya and Malawi CSO partners came together to develop strategy papers that will guide collaboration on issues related to COVID-19 response and recovery. For example, in Kenya the strategy paper includes a situation analysis (SWOT), communication/advocacy strategy, coalition resourcing strategy, expected outcome/impact and roles and responsibilities of the coalition

members.

These efforts to facilitate national CSO coalitions across countries has also enabled us to distill some relevant lessons about how to make more and steady progress towards continuing to strengthen and grow these coalitions. Lessons that will inform members' efforts in the second phase of the project.

- It is important to manage expectations clearly, in some countries calls for the building of such coalitions were interpreted by other CSOs as an opportunity to get funding from CTAP members. Being clear about what participants can achieve with and expect from the coalitions is important to ensure an organic growth of the coalition and commitment from its members.

- Continued communication is key, in most countries this meant the creation of whatsapp groups to coordinate actions, regular sharing of plans to avoid duplication of activities, and joint strategizing to build on coalition partners capacities and strengths.

- Do not rush the process, in some countries partners made it to the development of strategies while others have made it to more tactical joint activities or the generation of spaces for peer learning and sharing. This is fine, rushing the process might hinder relationships, while going with the pace of the processes and the culture of participants is leading to more sustainable processes.



Continued communication is key, in most countries this meant the creation of whatsapp groups to coordinate actions, regular sharing of plans to avoid duplication of activities, and joint strategizing to build on coalition partners capacities and strengths.

Promoting Action by Accountability Bodies

Citizen and civil society mobilization enabled CTAP members to raise the salience of issues related to transparency and accountability and reach out to different types of relevant stakeholders mandated to oversee the use of public resources. These stakeholders included parliaments, accountability agencies, and audit bodies. The engagement with these institutions enabled CTAP members across countries to contribute to results such as the initiation of investigations, carrying out reviews on COVID-19 spending, and creating opportunities for collaboration.

The main ways in which CTAP members have contributed to the **initiation of investigations** are through presenting cases to anti-corruption agencies and sustaining advocacy about instances of corruption. In Nigeria, investigative efforts led by CTAP members found evidence of cases of COVID-19-related corruption. Based on the results from these investigations, six petitions were sent to the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC). ICPC has initiated investigations and is collaborating with CTAP members to gather relevant facts and information to aid the investigation. In Cameroon and Malawi, sustained advocacy by members, and other CSOs in the context, through media and public statements about corruption cases related to health spending have promoted the initiation of audit processes

and investigations.

Another way in which CTAP members have promoted actions to increase the oversight and accountability on resources for COVID-19 response and recovery are through **engagement with parliamentarians**. These engagements have contributed to the creation of ad-hoc committees for reviewing COVID-19 allocation and spending in Ghana. Engagement with parliamentarians also provided an effective entry point in Kenya to present recommendations for the amendment of the Public Finance Management Act and the Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Bill. Additionally, in Sierra Leone, engagement with the parliament, specifically with the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO), has led to active conversations about collaboration to design and develop their website so that citizens can access more documents and listen to budget hearings at the national legislature.

Finally, with regards to accountability bodies, there have also been instances of collaborative action. In Liberia, CTAP partners engagement with that Audit Office – building on the real-time audit done in the country – is evolving into the development of a Memorandum of Understanding to collaborate in finding ways to simplify audit results and improve the mechanisms for disseminating those results so



It's important to note that despite the best intentions of these types of stakeholders, their effect on the wider context is limited to the political dynamics and their institutional capacities.

that they are more accessible and meaningful to citizens. In Sierra Leone, CTAP members have created opportunities for accountability institutions to interact with citizens in local service delivery tracking activities.

Engagement with parliaments, anti-corruption agencies, and accountability offices has proved useful for efforts to strengthen transparency and accountability about the use of COVID-19 resources for several CTAP members. They highlighted that once they get the right contacts, interaction with these agencies is not as hard as it is with the government given that there are shared goals in terms of improving the effectiveness of government action and

reducing space for corruption. These engagements oftentimes also enable the opening of opportunities for engagement with government stakeholders. It's important to note that despite the best intentions of these types of stakeholders, their effect on the wider context is limited to the political dynamics and their institutional capacities. There have been some cases in which auditors have been dismissed even after finding major instances of corruption and many cases in which findings from audits fail to translate into investigations, sanctions, or the recovery of public resources.

Encouraging Government Action

Engaging with government agencies and encouraging them to take specific actions with regards to transparency and accountability on the use of resources for COVID-19 response and recovery, has not been an easy task across CTAP focused countries. It has taken important effort and required ingenuity in the ways of presenting findings from research, spearheading advocacy campaigns, and finding out the most effective

ways to build trust. CTAP members have used different approaches and techniques that are fit to the political dynamics in the contexts in which they are working, the goals they are seeking in the engagement, and the level at which this engagement happens (see more detail about this in the country stories).



In the rest of this section we present some of the main types of actions that CTAP members have been able to encourage and highlight some reflections and lessons from those experiences.

Creating Space for Public Servants to Explain Management of COVID-19 Funds

Demanding access to information and explanations from the government about the use of responses has been an important part of CTAP members work. However, getting governments to release this information and engage in active conversations about the allocation decisions and the use of these resources tends to be hard. After trying different ways to seek the engagement of government representatives – see previous section, CTAP members in different countries found that setting up direct engagements with government representatives provided opportunities for government representatives to understand their goals and to become more welcome to requests for information and explanations about the use of resources. These approaches worked slightly differently at the local and national levels.

At the local level there was a tendency by government representatives directly working in service provision to be more open to questions and to provide the information that they had access to. These engagements oftentimes had to be carried out in an anonymous way to enable service providers to overcome fears of repercussions. However, in many instances, they were also interested in providing their views and sharing the challenges they faced in a more public way, as a way to explain to citizens why they are not able to provide the quality services they deserve (see for instance these videos from Nigeria and Cameroon). On the other hand, government representatives working at higher levels were not as open in the majority of cases. In Cameroon, CTAP members commonly were faced with local authorities claiming that they could not disclose

any information related to the use of public funds, without the approval of higher levels of government. Similarly, in Kenya, efforts to track the allocation and use of public resources led to the identification of many gaps at the local level, with the exception of some counties that already had some levels of transparency before the COVID outbreak.

At the national level, efforts to achieve transparency and responsiveness from government representatives varied widely across contexts. In contexts such as Nigeria, Kenya, and Liberia CTAP members relied on existing relationships and efforts to build trust with government officials to get them to participate in public events and virtual spaces such as Budget Hours and podcasts. In Nigeria, advocacy was used to achieve improvements in the documentation of the disbursement of resources by the government, which then provided public data on the breakdown of the expenditure. In other contexts such as Cameroon, Ghana, and Malawi achieving access to information and responsiveness from government officials remains a big challenge that requires strong advocacy and engagement to obtain very general questions or reactions to the presentation of evidence of mismanagement and waste. In Cameroon, after the launch of CTAP, the Ministry of Health published a two-page press release with very general information about the use of USD \$40 million, claiming that this was its total spending in response to COVID-19. The press release was a “farce” of transparency, but it provided a baseline for further investigations.



In other contexts such as Cameroon, Ghana, and Malawi achieving access to information and responsiveness from government officials remains a big challenge that requires strong advocacy and engagement.

Achieving Corrective Actions

CTAP members' advocacy and mobilization also enabled them to achieve corrective actions by governments ranging from dismissing government officials related to instances of corruption, to providing energy generators and other supplies to health facilities, to finalizing particular projects at the local level. In all of these instances the combination of hard evidence, advocacy campaigns, and clear demands were the combination of factors that enabled members to get an effective response. *Some examples of this achievements include:*

- In Malawi, the publication of CTAP research exposed how several people from the government had mismanaged COVID-19 funds. The publication of this evidence and related advocacy for the uptake of the findings led to the dismissal of the ministry of labor and several arrests. It's important to note that this was a big win for the CTAP team, given that a prior publication of an official audit exposing mismanagement of funds had led to any dismissals.

- In Liberia, CTAP members tracked the disbursement of subsidies to teachers finding out that the beneficiaries of the program were not receiving the funds promised by the government. These findings were used to carry out joint advocacy with teacher groups and other organizations in the country, and this advocacy led to improved disbursement of

funds to those teachers meant to benefit from the program. CTAP members and partners continued following up on the disbursement of funds with teachers.

- In Nigeria, the publication of the tracking of primary health service delivery led to investigations by other journalists which created pressure for the government to take corrective action. For instance, in the state of Osun, a journalist followed through on two of the primary health centers in which the CTAP report had shown deficiencies and presented the story in a widely known local radio. Two weeks after the broadcasting of the story, the two health centers received brand new generators.

The achievement of these types of corrective action is something that CTAP members will continue to actively seek and document. However, it's important to note that in most contexts even the acknowledgement of inefficiencies and mismanagement of resources is yet to move from dismissals and investigations, into actual sanctions for those involved and the recovery of the dilapidated resources. This has incentivized us to combine this type of actions demanding accountability with other approaches that based on collaboration with government agencies can contribute to preventing the mismanagement of funds and improve service delivery in a way that directly benefits citizens.



It's important to note that this was a big win for the CTAP team, given that a prior publication of an official audit exposing mismanagement of funds had led to any dismissals.

Nurturing Collaborative Approaches to Improve Service

Even if uneven across countries, the achievements of CTAP partners have begun to create opportunities for seeking active collaboration with governments for the improvement of transparency, accountability, and service delivery. One instance of this is the existing collaboration between CTAP members in Liberia and the Ministry of Finance to collaborate in improving the publication of fiscal data, including and beyond COVID-19 funds.

The biggest instance of this type of collaboration that has been achieved by CTAP members has happened in Nigeria. The mobilization of volunteers for tracking the state of primary health service delivery enabled CTAP members to get evidence showing the deficiencies that 90 Primary Health Centers in 15 states presented in spite of the mobilization of resources to improve them before and after the COVID outbreak. This evidence led to a broad conversation about this issue and to connect it to issues that related to COVID vaccine distribution and to a wider conversation about access to health by citizens in the country. Sustained advocacy and engagement with

government officials led to the formalization of a partnership with the National Primary Healthcare Development Agency (NPHCDA). This partnership grants CTAP members complete access to the information held by the agency needed for social accountability in the health sector and access to all PHCs for joint monitoring and evaluation of the delivery of health services, COVID-19 vaccine deployment, and health intervention programmes in the country.

It's important to note that this collaborative approach can create challenges when it comes to conducting advocacy that openly criticizes the government for its failings. CTAP members in these cases – as well as those mentioned in previous sections – have clearly stated that the existence of a collaborative relationship will not hinder their independence and that they will not shy away from difficult conversations about government failings. CTAP members also maintain their independence by not charging government agencies for their work in these collaborations.



The remaining section of this report will feature the story from each of the seven CTAP countries, as well as some reflections on the issues that they will prioritize during the second phase of the project.



CTAP Member Stories

The stories that summarize the journeys for each country partner along with the main theme highlighted in each are presented in the table on the next page:

Story title	Main Themes
The CTAP Cameroon Story: Lessons for addressing mistrust in the context of Covid-19 fiscal governance	Shares insights for pushing Covid-19 advocacy in a context filled with political tensions, as well as local authorities, civil servants and citizens who are reluctant to speak up
The CTAP Ghana Story: Lessons for scaling Covid accountability	Presents insights on leveraging relationships and working with other local institutions as a way to strategically scale the Covid-19 advocacy agenda across the country
The CTAP Kenya story: Lessons for building & sustaining collaborative Covid-19 advocacy agenda	Discusses lessons about improving government responsiveness and prioritization of needs of essential workers and vulnerable populations through citizen awareness and by building and coordinating the capacities of multiple stakeholders to engage in Covid-19 advocacy
CTAP Liberia: Lessons in incentivizing Covid-19 multi stakeholder partnerships	Shares insights from the successes of attracting and formulating partnerships with government stakeholders and accountability institutions
The CTAP Malawi Story: Lessons in generating and sustaining Covid-19 advocacy efforts	Explores insights around building relationships with multiple stakeholders in order to co-create & sustain an advocacy agenda
The CTAP Nigeria Story: Lessons on civic tech and open data for Covid-19 accountability	Discusses 3 main lessons that CODE and BudgIT have learned from their previous experiences in using civic tech and data to promote accountability and applied it to the CTAP project in Nigeria and beyond.
The CTAP Sierra Leone story: Lessons for strengthening Covid accountability beyond reforms	Share's lessons from fighting Covid corruption using interventions that go beyond legal reforms



The CTAP Cameroon Story: Lessons for Addressing Mistrust in the context of Covid-19 Fiscal Governance

A farce of COVID fiscal transparency

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in Cameroon, the IMF has approved two emergency loans to the central African state totaling \$382 million of which a significant portion was allocated to the Special National Solidarity Fund (SNSF) to fight COVID-19. Despite commitments by the government to the IMF to be transparent about its Covid-19 spending, by May 2021, most of the \$335 million loan from the IMF could not be accounted for and the SNSF had been marred by secrecy and credible allegations of widespread mismanagement and corruption.

ADE⁹ produced a research report which looked into how the national Covid-19 special response National Solidarity Fund of \$USD 335 million was utilized to support capital and operating expenses related to strengthening the health system, economic and financial resilience, and

the strengthening of research and innovation. Their research found a lack of transparency and publicly available information on how the COVID-19 special grant is being allocated and spent and the only publicly available information was in press releases that the government issued from time to time, which contained information that was too general to allow real scrutiny by the public and/or active Cameroonians. The research also found that the little information provided in the press release contained discrepancies between the funds they claim were allocated towards projects and the actual expenditures on those same projects.

In addition, ADE conducted onsite visits to hospitals and interviews with health care workers, to verify whether the goods and services announced by the government were indeed delivered and received, however ADE site visits and interviews did not find evidence to confirm that most of the targets and promised

9. In Cameroon, ADE is spearheading the local chapter of the Follow the Money (FTM), and Ndî Nancy Saiboh, the program's lead at ADE, is coordinating the implementation of the COVID-19 Transparency and Accountability Project (CTAP) project in Cameroon.

deliverables were received. ADE utilized findings from their research findings and preliminary on-site visits to coalesce other local stakeholders (mainly CSOs, health care workers, and journalists) into conducting a more intensive nationwide service delivery tracking campaign.

ADE chose to track Covid-19 implementation commitments and targets related to primary health care infrastructure relevant for Covid-19 treatment and vaccine distribution (PPE, masks, oxygen, personnel, storage facilities, etc.) at the district level in 5 regions (Far North, Southern, Eastern, North West, Central regions). ADE did not have much information to rely on with their service delivery tracking such as budget documents or audit reports. However, in response to these challenges, *ADE deployed the following strategies:*

- Partnering with journalists, universities, and local CSOs to collect budget allocation/planning data and verify expenditures.
- Identifying state champions that can share information anonymously.
- Diversifying entry points for requesting data. Using global and regional sources of data

Furthermore, ADE partnered with local journalists, community members, and other local/grassroots CSOs to assist with their service delivery efforts by visiting sites, and conducting formal and informal interviews with

service delivery beneficiaries and frontline workers. Health care workers were more than happy to participate in interviews because they felt overlooked and they wanted to take up the opportunity to express their challenges and frustrations.

So far, ADE's nationwide campaign has revealed that local health care centers lack the infrastructure, capacity, and resources to support COVID-19 treatment and vaccine distribution. Primary health care centers do not have basic needs such as water and electricity and lack sufficient equipment and medical personnel to support vaccine rollout.¹⁰

Building trust and accountability through social movements

During the implementation of their research and service delivery activities, ADE has encountered allegations privately and in the public domain of serious mismanagement and corruption of Covid-19 funding. Publicly, in December 2020 President commissioned the Ministry of Justice and Supreme Court (CONSUPE) to conduct a judicial inquiry into the expenditure of the National Solidarity Fund (NSF).

An audit report on the accountability of the National Solidarity Special funds allocated for the fight against COVID-19 in Cameroon confirms many government officials were involved in serious financial crimes in the handling of the funds. The 171-page document has analyzed



When it comes to responsiveness, data is centralized and local authorities don't want to talk or share information without national authorities' permission.

¹⁰. There is also a lack of clarity around responsibilities between health care workers personnel and district administrators.

several incidents of malpractice from Ministers such as overbilling of equipment and services, illegal sale of equipment by Ministers and other public officials, there was widespread overbilling in the purchase of personal protective equipment, and more.

Whilst the CONSUPE's audit and judicial inquiry are important steps toward accountability for COVID-19 funding, the lack of trust concerning the level of transparency and independence of government agencies poses a significant concern about the credibility of these audit findings and whether the government will take up the audit recommendations and prosecute the high-level officials implicated in the audit.

ADE's attempts to engage government stakeholders with their research and service delivery findings and recommendations have been unsuccessful; there is a sense that government actors do not trust the interests tied to the work of transparency and accountability to respond to the Covid-19 emergency. When it comes to responsiveness, data is centralized and local authorities don't want to talk or share information without national authorities' permission. There are structural barriers and inadequate dynamics with public officials and health care workers to elicit their full cooperation. In Cameroon, senior government officials have used the pandemic to silence and intimidate opponents by arresting those critical of governments handling the pandemic. In an environment filled with political tensions, local authorities, civil servants and citizens are reluctant to speak up and engage in activities that could lead to their arrests. To successfully track service delivery on the ground, multi-stakeholder collaborative relationships and some level of openness and cooperation are important.

Right now the government does not trust us. They think that we are involved with the opposition. We are trying to meet with senior government officials to explain our motivations so that they can trust us – Nancy Saiboh, CTAP Cameroon Coordinator

ADE's story demonstrates that trust and accountability are the basis upon which open governance flourishes, and without them, it's near impossible to make real progress. To that end, ADE does not plan on giving up on its attempts to engage the government to clear up these misconceptions including demonstrating the instrumental value of increasing Covid-19 transparency which aligns with the government's interests of mitigating the social and economic impact of the pandemic in the country. ADE continues to advocate for change by finding ways to communicate indirectly to both government and non-government stakeholders through mainstream media, participatory videos, and social media (Twitter, Facebook, and Whatsapp) to spearhead its citizen awareness, education, and mobilization campaigns.

Since direct communication with senior government officials is challenging – especially at a time when speaking out publicly against the government is likely to result in arbitrary arrests, ADE hopes that by mobilizing local CSOs, communities, and local authorities, they can more safely and effectively advance their Covid-19 transparency agenda.

Social Movement building is an aspect we highlight the most when developing and building coalitions with other organizations. We strongly

believe that organizational objectives are effectively achieved by mostly the will of the people behind them - Nancy Saiboh, CTAP Cameroon Coordinator

In 2022, ADE will aim to ramp up their regional and local advocacy campaign highlighting the findings and recommendations of the recently

published audit findings as well as findings from their very own CTAP research and service delivery findings to get people to demand accountability and reforms. ADE will also focus on tracking vaccine distribution and monitoring the delivery of Covid related primary health care services.





The CTAP Ghana Story: Lessons for Scaling Covid Accountability

The Covid-19 transparency challenge

Ghana currently has minimal data on Covid-19 expenditures in the public domain. Public budget documents such as the recently published 2020 Annual Budget Performance Report by the MoF and the 2020 Mid Year Review of the Budget Statement contain minimal information on Covid-19 expenditures. This lack of information is further exacerbated by the absence of a special audit report or investigations on the use of public resources for the national COVID-19 emergency response plan. BudgIT Ghana¹¹ has been persistent in finding the data they seek using the FOI Act to obtain some answers but without much success. Only powerful media organizations and watchdogs groups have been able to get some information using the FOI Act. Due to the pandemic, FOI Act requests now have to be submitted by email, which means only a

privileged few can do so, furthermore, remote requests are less likely to be responded or acknowledged by the authorities.

BudgIT Ghana has had a challenging time engaging directly and seeking information from the government especially at the local level. This is because a lot of the Covid-19 fiscal data is centralized at the national level (MoF offices) and often local government offices claim to not have access to expenditure information themselves. The few local government officials who do have access want to cooperate but are hesitant to share information for fear of repercussions.

Public officials are not yet ready to discuss issues pertaining to Covid related accountability out in the open yet - Ray Nkum, Project Coordinator

To try and address this transparency challenge,

11. BudgIT Foundation is a foremost civic-tech organization leading the advocacy for fiscal transparency and accountability in public finance. BudgIT Foundation started operations in Ghana in September 2019 and today BudgIT Ghana is coordinating the implementation of the CTAP project in Ghana under the leadership of Ray Nkum, Programs Lead at BudgIT Ghana.

the CTAP project invested in generating research and in publishing a report titled Kenya, Ghana & Nigeria: A review on Laws on COVID-19 Resource Management. The research publication identified accountability gaps and challenges with Covid-19 funding such as inflated cost of goods and services for food distribution programs and testing kits, and diversion of palliatives for political purposes.

In response to these research findings, BudgIT Ghana has been tracking the delivery of health infrastructure projects by conducting hospital site visits to verify the quantity and quality of public health infrastructure contracts, as well as to investigate access to personal protective equipment and the roll-out of the national COVID-19 education campaign. The absence of information has made BudgIT Ghana's attempts to track the delivery of services challenging. Ghana's Procurement Act requires procuring entities to prepare a procurement plan to support its approved programme and post it on the Public Procurement Authority (PPA) website. However, CTAP Ghana has observed that some plans are uploaded to the website and not to Ghana's Electronic Procurement System (GHANEPS),¹² which means other sources of funding are missing and are not as publicly accessible and available. In addition, BudgIT Ghana's experience with using public procurement platforms such as GHANEPS and the government's Project Delivery Tracker has highlighted that it is not easy to navigate and it does not contain comprehensive and up to date information.

To address this data gap, BudgIT Ghana has been interviewing health care beneficiaries, health care workers, and hospital administrators. This has not been easy as many are afraid to speak out publicly for fear of retribution. In the end, BudgIT Ghana's interview and research data have found some discrepancies between the data reflected on the government COVID-19 platforms, the procurement infrastructure database, and the delivery of the projects on site.

Strategies for scaling advocacy for accountability

Being new and small in the Ghana context, BudgIT Ghana has been very smart and strategic about how to do stakeholder engagement and networking. BudgIT Ghana has collaborated with established and well-known local CSOs such as IBP, SEND Ghana, and Economic Governance Platform to collaborate on Covid-19 advocacy activities such as conducting joint research, service delivery tracking, and coalition workshops.

We always looking to work with other local institutions as a way to scale across the country - Ray Nkum, Programs Lead at BudgIT Ghana

Convening CSOs is one thing but unifying them under one coalition to demand transparency and accountability on such a broad issue like COVID-19 is quite another. BudgIT Ghana is slowly building its visibility and capability to



BudgIT Ghana is aiming to mobilize the power of young people to influence powerful actors to advance the Covid-19 transparency and accountability agenda. They believe educating the youth will have wideout ramifications to achieving accountability.

¹² Ghana launched a public sector e-procurement platform Ghana's Electronic Procurement System (GHANEPS) to reduce face-to-face human contact involving tenders.



influence local multi-stakeholder advocacy agendas, as well as to spark and scale collective action. They are taking the necessary time to build relationships and interact with other local CSOs and map and leverage the power dynamics in their context. Not too long ago, Ghana's youth spearheaded one of the largest nationwide protests in the country under the banner #Fixthecountry, BudgIT Ghana's Covid transparency advocacy agenda deliberately targets youth-led or youth-focused organizations¹³ directly and on social media through videos, podcasts, and infographics. BudgIT Ghana is aiming to mobilize the power of young people to influence powerful actors to advance the Covid-19 transparency and

accountability agenda. They believe educating the youth will have wideout ramifications to achieving accountability.

Going into 2022, BudgIT Ghana's coalition and communications strategy will aim to identify local, small but effective partners that share similar priorities and have the capacity to execute research and service delivery tracking collaboration and advocacy activities. BudgIT Ghana will also continue to prioritize tracking health infrastructure renovation projects funded by the government's US\$100 million Ghana Investment Infrastructure Fund (GIIF). They also plan on building collaborative relationships with government and accountability stakeholders to support the successful implementation of the GIIF.

¹³. Organizations like YOLE-Youth Leaders Fellowship Programme and the UNFPA youth fellowship to show the value of transparency and accountability with issues that young people care about particularly education, social welfare, and corruption.



The CTAP Kenya Story: Lessons for Building & Sustaining Collaborative Covid-19 Advocacy Agenda

A failure to provide relief for the vulnerable

During the pandemic, the government of Kenya introduced and expanded a range of social programs to cushion the vulnerable from the economic impact of the pandemic. In March 2020, President Uhuru Kenyatta announced a Ksh10 billion (US\$100 million) social protection fund for the elderly, orphans, and those with underlying health conditions. In total, the Kenyan government rolled out an economic stimulus package totaling KSh53.7 billion (approximately US\$470 million) to cushion citizens and vulnerable groups from the effects of the pandemic by mainly providing relief and support using cash transfer programs.

To date, detailed information on how these cash transfer programs, as well as how overall funds from the Kenya Covid-19 Emergency Response Fund were allocated and used, is not available, and disaggregated information on Covid-19

budget allocations is scant. This is worrisome given that a special audit report investigated Covid-19 related procurements by the Kenya Medical Supplies Authority (KEMSA) which revealed incidents of corruption.

A research report by Slums Information Development & Resource Centers¹⁴ (SIDAREC) analyzed publicly available Health and Social sector budget allocations and expenditures as well as analyzed the national government Covid-19 grant allocation and how that Covid-19 grant was distributed to local county governments. The research found that during the pandemic there was a reduction in budget allocations to essential services in the health sector and WASH programs, as well as, social welfare programs and children service programs. In addition, there was low utilization of Covid-19 funds by county governments which was attributed to the late release of the funds by the national government. As a result, the untimely disbursement of the funds stalled

14. The CTAP project Kenya is being implemented by SIDAREC, a Kenyan registered grassroots communication NGO operating in three major informal settlements in Nairobi. The project team consists of Eve Nicole Mathai who is the head of programs at SIDAREC and Josephine Nyamai who is the program manager of Ke Budget Talk. Eve Mathai is coordinating the implementation of CTAP Kenya activities with Josephine Nyamai supporting the implementation of CTAP activities in Kenya.

several Covid-19 related service delivery programs.

SIDAREC's research findings also found that public officials were flaunting procurement procedures and regulations when procuring Covid-19 goods and services. They also found there was a lack of publicly available financial information on the utilization of these funds in addition to serious gaps in oversight and accountability at the local level. Additional research from SIDAREC showed that the budget for vaccines is not sufficient to meet the demand.

When it comes to accessing information to do research and service delivery tracking the government has been cooperative and willing – to a large extent – to share information with SIDAREC, especially at the national level. However, they have experienced some challenges including unavailability of expenditure information in certain counties at the local level.¹⁵

During the course of collecting and communicating their findings, SIDAREC has shared its research directly with other local CSOs and parliament, and has also used it to advocate for corrective action to be taken against public officials who misused Covid19 funds. They are also advocating for an increase in budget allocations for health and social welfare as well as for greater oversight of Covid-19 budgets at the local level.

Navigating information & accountability gaps

SIDAREC leveraged their budget analysis and advocacy expertise to review the details of the Kenyan national and county public financial budget documentation in order to get the information they needed.¹⁶ SIDAREC also leveraged the budget process in Kenya – which is an important part of government planning and decision-making – and the audit report to inform their research and service delivery tracking activities.

As part of their advocacy agenda, SIDAREC is now advocating for county governments to make publicly available more Covid-19 expenditure information, particularly for key local service delivery programs including health, water, sanitation, and social welfare disbursements. To date, SIDAREC has received mixed responses to their petitions and requests for information from county governments. Most of the county governments have neither made this information available nor responded to the petitions. For example, Nairobi County, which has the least amount of publicly available information, has repeatedly used bureaucracy to frustrate any efforts to obtain information using the FOIA. Turkana County – a County that performed well in the County Budget Transparency Survey – has been very receptive and cooperative to SIDAREC's petitions for more data to conduct service delivery tracking activities.



As such SIDAREC will continue to build and strengthen its online and radio communication platforms, train coalition members and local journalists to maintain the spotlight and public pressure on management of Covid-19 funds and the vaccine roll out.

¹⁵ SIDAREC found that the following Counties: Nairobi, Bomet, Embu, Kirinyaga, Mandela, Meru, Mombasa and Nakuru Counties "did not provide details on expenditure and utilization of Covid-19 funds as of July 2021" in time for Office of the Controller of Budgets Special Investigative Report.

¹⁶ SIDAREC's research relied on available public financial documents from the National Treasury and the special audit reports from the Offices of the Controller of Budgets and Auditor-General.

Mobilizing for sustainable change

SIDAREC has been building synergy and collective action towards tracking the management of COVID-19 resources by hosting multi-stakeholder coalition workshops to convene influential and active local partners doing work aligned with CTAP objectives. By convening multiple stakeholders with shared interests and similar goals in their contexts, SIDAREC managed to form a collaborative action plan with civil society partners TI-Kenya and The Kenya Legal & Ethical Issues Network (KILEN). The action plan leverages each organization's expertise, resources, and networks to advance this shared advocacy agenda, and it delegates roles and responsibilities. SIDAREC opted to utilize their budget analysis, training, and communication skills to train members of this coalition group on how to analyze and monitor Covid-19 budget allocations and expenditures. They also committed to facilitate training to train coalition members on how to communicate their budget analysis findings to local communities and audiences. TI-Kenya's focus has been on researching the implications of poor fiscal management and public debt on social welfare programs, while KILEN's interest has been to track the delivery of health infrastructure and vaccination programs. SIDAREC has joined forces with KILEN to track the rollout of Covid-19 vaccines in 6 counties.

SIDAREC has strategically used the power of social media through partnering with local CSOs to conduct joint Twitter chats and Facebook live to have recurring conversations on different sub-topics of Covid transparency and accountability. In addition, through their community radio station (Ghetto FM) as well as their online budget literacy and communication platform Ke Budget Talk,

SIDAREC has been able to promote public participation and enhance the dissemination of budget-related information during and after lockdowns. Furthermore, they have managed to target and tailor communication products for poor and vulnerable urban communities and continue to leverage a network of other local community radio stations as well as local community journalists in these areas.

Going into 2022, SIDAREC's long-term strategy is to build sustainability into the Covid transparency and accountability agenda so that it continues outside of SIDAREC and beyond the lifetime of the CTAP project.

For us to ensure sustainability around Covid transparency and accountability beyond the project we have to build up budget champions and secondly, we have to integrate the agenda daily into our work and then lastly we have to invest a lot in community radio and social media to build a grassroots movement around this issue- Josephine Nyamai, program manager at SIDAREC.

As such SIDAREC will continue to build and strengthen its online and radio communication platforms, train coalition members and local journalists to maintain the spotlight and public pressure on management of Covid-19 funds and the vaccine roll out. Given that 2022 is an election year in Kenya, SIDAREC also sees an opportunity to leverage the current political climate to mobilize the community to increase political pressure for the government to improve Covid-19 transparency and accountability, as well as to improve the delivery of health and social services. Their mobilization efforts will target the majority of people living in the slums, because informal settlements are powerful and influential contexts which impact election outcomes.



The CTAP Liberia Story: Lessons in incentivizing Covid-19 multi stakeholder partnerships

A failure to learn from the past

COVID-19 was the second pandemic of the decade for Liberia. Just six years ago, a weak and under-resourced health care system collapsed under the weight of the Ebola outbreak in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. In 2015, Liberia's General Auditing Commission (GAC) published an audit of the National Ebola Trust Fund (NETF) which found as much as US\$4 million unaccounted funds and up to US\$2 million in irregular expenditure. The GAC report highlighted the weaknesses of the public finance management systems and accountability institutions in Liberia which failed to protect lives. It also highlighted the fact that corruption and financial irregularities resulted from flouting procurement regulations as well as the lack of transparency and oversight of expenditures.

Although Liberia's past experiences with the

Ebola virus provided the country and the rest of the world with useful insights into the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic; it is clear from CTAP Liberia research findings that past lessons and recommendations about strengthening systems of financial accountability and oversight in emergencies have not been put into practice. CTAP Liberia research reports¹⁷ analyzed the government's response to COVID-19, including the allocation, disbursement, and expenditure of COVID-19 resources. They found that payments were made without valid contracts, there were also unaccounted expenditures, breaches in funding transfers, and inappropriate handling of Covid funds.

These research reports also found that the Liberian government failed to make contracting and procurement processes transparent to investigate reported cases of Covid-19 corruption and to give oversight

17. Country Analysis Report: Covid-19 Incidence and Resource Management in Liberia and Liberia: Transparency and Accountability During Covid Outbreak accessible on the CTAP website resources page <https://www.covidfund.africa/resources/documents>

institutions – , like the Internal Audit Agency (IAA), the General Auditing Commission (GAC), the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) and the Public Procurement Concession Commission (PPCC) – support to conduct an independent audit of all government bodies and agencies including private contractors that received Covid-19 funding.

Service delivery tracking in the time of Covid

CTAP Liberia, in their efforts to increase transparency and accountability on COVID-19 funds, has engaged in service delivery tracking of education, health, and social welfare programs at the local level in order to verify program deliverables and uncover abuse or waste.¹⁸

Service delivery findings

CTAP Liberia found that the majority of private teachers who qualified to receive cash transfers did not benefit from the program, and those that received cash transfers experienced major delays. They also found that the public health and isolation centers were not adequately equipped and financially prepared, despite having gone through a similar experience during the Ebola outbreak. Once again the government relied on donors to build additional health and isolation centers and has not published expenditure data to show how these donor funds were used.

In addition, CTAP Liberia found that during the period of distribution a large number of vulnerable citizens reported not benefiting from the government's palliative food distribution program. Many of these citizens expressed dissatisfaction over the way the food distribution project was biased by political interference and favoritism. Lastly, CTAP Liberia found that there was no publicly available expenditure data on the implementation of the housing and lighting project in Grand Kru County.

Creating a conducive environment for service delivery tracking

CTAP Liberia struggled to do service delivery tracking mainly due to the unavailability of disaggregated and comprehensive data of Covid-19 expenditures. They have acted in technically and politically savvy ways to track service delivery in the absence of data. CTAP Liberia partners collected data mainly through the use of surveys, questionnaires, interviews, site visits, and through identifying state champions who were willing to share information anonymously. Not only did they have to contend with the unavailability of data, they also had to contend with the challenges and costs associated with traveling long distances and to remote areas. They also had to overcome logistical issues of weak internet connectivity which made data collection and sharing difficult. Furthermore, they were met with a lot of resistance from local authorities who are not used to a culture of accountability



Outside of the CTAP project, BudgIT Liberia is working in partnership with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP) to develop a citizen's guide to the national budget under global multi-stakeholder initiatives.

18. CTAP Liberia tracked how the government of Liberia spent \$1 million funding which was to pay private schools' teachers salaries during the peak of Covid-19 in 4 districts of Margibi County. They also tracked how the government spent funds from international donors to renovate isolation/treatment centers in Montserrado County. In addition to tracking how Covid funding was spent in health and education sectors, they also tracked how Covid-19 funds were used to deliver the following social welfare and palliative programs: Liberia's COVID-19 Household Food Support Programme (COHFSP) with an overall budget of USD 30 million which was partially spent in Bong County; The Covid-19 intervention housing and lighting projects in Grand Kru County; and The Stimulus package (food distribution) project implementation project in Grand Bassa county.

and citizen participation.

We faced immense difficulties with the service delivery tracking. Volunteers had to go into the field with little resources and had to cover long distances often by foot in order to meet their targets. On the ground, they faced a lot of resistance from both the communities and authorities, they had to do a lot of explaining and convincing
- Dennis Kromah, Director of Yard Liberia.

It took a lot of collaborating, bootstrapping, ingenuity, and hard work on the part of CTAP Liberia to take on service delivery tracking activities. CTAP Liberia's service delivery tracking experience has made them realize that the availability of disaggregated data on expenditures is a prerequisite to any meaningful service delivery tracking, particularly at the local level. Furthermore, it is easier to get community support and citizen participation in service delivery activities if you are able to provide them with decentralized and disaggregated data on COVID-19 response plans for primary health centers in specific localities.

Attracting and leveraging government partnerships

Members of CTAP Liberia, mainly BudgIT Liberia, have taken advantage of pre-existing relationships with government stakeholders and open government initiatives connected to CTAP objectives and activities. Outside of the CTAP project, BudgIT Liberia is working in partnership with the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP) to develop a citizen's guide to the national budget under global multi-stakeholder initiatives such as The Open

Government Partnership and The Open Budget Initiative.

BudgIT Liberia has taken advantage of the political buy-in to make information more accessible to citizens. Currently, BudgIT Liberia is in conversations with the MFDP who have expressed an interest to partner with them by featuring regularly on their Facebook live and radio program Budget Hour. This program is a talk show that educates citizens about the national budget and public resources and a platform for government actors to share updates on budget implementation - including Covid-19 fiscal issues - as well as to answer citizens' questions and receive citizen feedback on budget allocations and implementation.

This shift in political buy-in to educate Liberian citizens on the national budget and increase citizen participation in fiscal governance also includes accountability institutions such as the Liberian Audit Authority, the Anti Corruption Commission, and Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO). Since the launch of the CTAP project and the dissemination of the CTAP research and service delivery findings, CTAP Liberia has attracted the attention of important institutions which are key to advancing the Covid-19 transparency agenda in the country.

BudgIT Liberia is spearheading MoU discussions with the Audit Office on how they can help with simplifying and disseminating audit reports so that they are more accessible and meaningful to ordinary citizens. In addition, the PBO is interested in working with BudgIT Liberia to design and develop their website so that citizens can access more documents and listen to budget hearings at the national legislature.

CTAP Liberia's strategy is to continue to build collaborative relationships with local CSOs, government stakeholders as well as accountability institutions. Collaborations with government stakeholders and accountability institutions will increase CTAP Liberia's ability to access information and influence Covid-19 transparency agenda and broader fiscal governance reforms.

However, this strategy also creates challenges when it comes to conducting advocacy that openly criticizes the government for its failings. This can create tensions in the partnership. To manage this tension, members of CTAP Liberia provide support to the government free of charge, which helps them to maintain their independence. When engaging in collaboration discussions, BudgIT Liberia does not shy away from difficult conversations by being open and upfront about their role as an

advocacy group and not a consultancy organization, so government stakeholders are aware of their advocacy campaigns as well as their public discussions about government failings.

Going into 2022, CTAP Liberia will advance the Covid-19 transparency agenda by focusing more on COVID-19 health care services and other health sector challenges. They will do this mainly by tracking Covid-19 related health care expenditures as well as the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out. Strengthening relationships with both government institutions, accountability institutions as well as local CSOs and communities will remain a priority, including facilitating interactions between these multiple stakeholders.





The CTAP Malawi Story: Lessons in generating and sustaining Covid-19 advocacy efforts

Outrage over misplaced priorities

Malawi's Ombudsman¹⁹ Office released an investigative report in November 2020 and the Office of the Auditor General an Audit Report in March 2021 that confirmed a series of discrepancies in the government's management of the country's Covid-19 300 million Malawian kwacha response plan. The reports found that a significant portion of the funding allocated was misused and misspent on non-Covid-19 expenses such as staff allowances and benefits. The reports also revealed that government departments hired unnecessary staff and made payments for days they never worked. It was a reflection of misspending, poor planning, and mismanagement.

Malawi's President dismissed the public officers

including high-level officials implicated in the abuse of Covid-19 Disbursement funds from their posts and over 60 arrests were made, yet the officials have not been indicted and there has been little to no PFM reforms improving the management and the level of transparency and accountability of Covid funds.

All this unleashed outrage from citizens who viewed this as an example of rampant corruption which led to civic activism as well as civic demands for Covid transparency and accountability. CTAP's²⁰ lead country partner, Follow the Money Malawi (FtM) was able to leverage the findings from audit reports and the public outcry by issuing a press release highlighting their research findings and recommendations as well as engaging directly with citizens and CSOs about the changes they should demand. It was an opportunity to shape the advocacy agenda and strengthen public demands for accountability.

19. The Office of the Ombudsman is a public institution established to investigate cases where it is alleged that a person has suffered injustices and it does not appear that there is any remedy reasonably available by way of appeal from court or where there is no other practicable remedy.

20. Follow the Money (FtM) Malawi is the lead country partner coordinating and implementing the CTAP project in Malawi. Spearheading the local chapter of the Follow the Money (FtM) and CTAP in Malawi is Sharon Kalima Nkhwazi and Rodger Phiri, in Malawi on behalf of Positive, and spearheading the local chapter with Follow the Money.

Based on FtM Malawi COVID-19 Incidence and Resource Management Research Liberaia as well as the findings of the investigative reports; FtM Malawi is demanding that the government exercises greater oversight of procurement processes and improves the capabilities of local governments to monitor allocations and expenditures in order to more efficiently respond to corruption. Their research also highlights the need for better emergency preparedness in sectors such as health and disaster management.

What it takes to make a change

FtM Malawi has struggled with a lack of responsiveness and cooperation from the government.

“(...) We have been trying very hard to get the government to respond to our questions and to engage with us but when we saw we were not getting anywhere with them, we turned our attention towards engaging with other public agencies that shared similar interests and similar goals of improving Covid Transparency” – Rodger CTAP Malawi implementation team member.

As such, they have focused their coalition-building efforts to engage with key agencies with similar interests that were aligned with CTAP and were thus more willing to

cooperate & supply data. FtM Malawi developed partnerships with oversight & accountability actors such as the Office of the Auditor General, the Anti Corruption Bureau, The Office of the Ombudsman and with members of the National Assembly in the Health and Budget parliamentary committees. In addition, they partnered with other civil society organizations, like the local CSO Human Rights Defenders of Malawi (HRDC) and have collectively continued to apply pressure on the government to adopt concrete Covid-19 PFM reforms.

Not only have FtM Malawi focused on building relationships with multiple stakeholders in order to co-create an advocacy agenda, but they have also focused on building local coalition and local CTAP chapters as a way to generate ownership and sustain interest in efforts to track Covid-19 funds.

“We don’t want to just build individual relationships with various organizations, we want to facilitate building relationships between various local stakeholders” – Sharon Kalima Kwhazi, CTAP Malawi coordinator

FtM Malawi convened local CSOs to coalition meetings in Lilongwe and Blantyre. FtM Malawi used the coalition meetings to help local stakeholders to co-create a Covid-19 transparency advocacy agenda with multiple stakeholders across local contexts. One collaboration opportunity that emerged from the coalition workshop is a partnership between FtM Malawi and the Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation (CHRR) to mobilize civic



In addition, they partnered with other civil society organizations, like the local CSO Human Rights Defenders of Malawi (HRDC) and have collectively continued to apply pressure on the government to adopt concrete Covid-19 PFM reforms.

participation in open contracting by enabling citizens to identify, monitor, and track Covid-19 government funded contracts at the community level.

FtM Malawi has been very good at linking the SDG agenda with the CTAP agenda, which has enabled them to gain support and political buy-in across multiple institutions and national key actors as a way to get Covid-19 transparency reforms prioritized in the public agenda.

By 2021, FtM Malawi has learned about the power and value of combining multi-stakeholder relationships and

operating at the national and local levels. Going into 2022, they plan to build a stronger coalition force by facilitating collaborative relationships as well as the exchange of information between diverse partners. They hope that this will enable them to amplify the impact of sharing results from tracking Covid-19 funds at the local level. They also plan to continue to strengthen the connection between the Covid-19 transparency and accountability agenda and the SDG agenda by working towards mobilizing and training the youth to take interest in demanding improved participation and government action.





The CTAP Nigeria Story: Lessons on civic tech and open data for Covid-19 accountability

Strengthening Nigeria transparency and accountability context

With the outbreak of Covid-19, many of Africa's health and basic service delivery systems have already been placed under considerable strain. As a result, international financial institutions, private foundations, and development agencies are pledging billions of dollars for governments to successfully combat Covid-19 and cushion the most vulnerable populations from its socio-economic impact. There is currently a lack of transparency and accountability concerning the allocations and expenditures of these funds. Through the CTAP project, BudgIT and CODE have been tracking a range of financial allocations committed through public budgets, grants, donations, loans and material support towards the fight against Covid-19 in African countries.

The Nigerian government set aside N500 billion (approximately US \$1 billion) for Covid-19 interventions in the country.²¹ Budget transparency and accountability as well as citizen monitoring of budget implementation has always been a challenge in Nigeria. This challenge has been exacerbated by the extraneous circumstances brought about by the pandemic, mainly the massive cash injections into weak PFM systems and the bypassing of public procurement regulations to implement emergency response plans. Now more than ever is getting budget transparency and accountability right, a matter of life and death.

CODE & BudgIT have long been engaged in strengthening Nigeria's transparency and accountability context by facilitating citizen access to budget data; building the capacity of citizens to make use of the data; and organizing data-driven advocacy agendas that influence

21. CTAP publication "Nigeria: Transparency and Accountability during Covid-19 outbreak" P. 24 - Budget Office of the Federation.

the government's implementation of public services.

3 major learnings

CODE and BudgIT have taken lessons learned from their previous experiences in using civic tech and data to promote accountability and applied it to the CTAP project in Nigeria in the following ways.

Lesson #1: Technology can play a vital role in gathering different data sources in a 'one-stop-shop' and presenting it in an easily accessible way


Civic monitoring of Covid-19 funds is a difficult task as well as a huge undertaking. This is because COVID-19 has multiple revenue streams (private sector, foreign assistance, private donations, debt loans, national & sub-national budgets & emergency funds). The federal government of Nigeria has been proactively releasing information to citizens on COVID-19 donations by foreign donors and the private sector as well as on Covid-19 expenditures. However, it has taken a fragmented approach to share information through different agencies, and several portals.²² According to research conducted by the CTAP Nigeria team, data on these online platforms is incomplete, non-comprehensive, and not up to date. The data is not always accessible because links are not always functional and the data is not presented in

formats that enable target audiences to easily find information relevant to their questions and needs.

CTAP Nigeria collated data from these multiple sources as well as conducted research into the resources that the Nigerian government is receiving to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic.²³ This includes a mapping of in-kind and cash donations received from multilateral, the donor community, and local stakeholders. BudgIT initially created the CovidFundTracka website with a dashboard to visualize country-level data on Covid-19 in Nigeria. The website "tracks Covid-19 donations given to the federal and state governments of Nigeria ranging from private and public, local and international organizations." The Covid Fund Tracka website was an inspiration for the CTAP project to launch the CovidFund Africa website which contains data sets of information that helps ordinary citizens to easily search for answers to key accountability questions in simple but effective ways²⁴

Lesson #2: Tech and data is a means to an end and not an end in itself

Open data tools often end up on a long list of interesting but unused resources doing very little²⁵ to bring about the desired change in the context. In BudgIT and CODE's experience, increasing citizens' access to information through technology alone is not sufficient for

 *CTAP Nigeria has demonstrated the instrumental value of open data platforms by using Covid-19 fiscal data to conduct in depth research as well as to engage in service delivery tracking in response to contextual challenges such as high levels of Covid-19 related mortality, inequality, and unemployment.*

22. The Presidential Task Force on COVID-19 curated an information portal www.NGCOVID19ResourcePortal.info to brief the public on donations, state, federal government and private sector funding; the National Bureau of Statistics ArcGIS Platform; and the NCDC COVID-19 Dashboard. The federal government also introduced a dedicated segment for publishing proactive disclosures on COVID-19 expenditures on its OpenTreasury platform.

23. CTAP Nigeria published the following research reports accessible at the CTAP website: Nigeria: Unintended Consequences of COVID-19 on Vulnerable Groups; Nigeria: Transparency and Accountability during COVID-19 outbreak; Kenya, Ghana & Nigeria: A review on Laws on COVID-19 Resource Management; Nigeria: Primary Health Care and COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution.

24. Through this website citizens can find out: What is the funding source? (where the money comes from); Who is the recipient? (where the money is going -by region; subnational unit; government agency); What is the purpose of the funding? (how the money will be used)

25. Hivos blog: Civic engagement for open contracting - lessons learned, published 21 September 2017

citizen participation and state accountability.²⁶ BudgIT & CODE's organizational strategy and approach have been to bring about fiscal governance reforms using data and technology in combination with citizen mobilization efforts such as Tracka and Follow the Money (FtM) with the end goal of addressing problems citizens care about.

CTAP Nigeria has demonstrated the instrumental value of open data platforms by using Covid-19 fiscal data to conduct in depth research as well as to engage in service delivery tracking²⁷ in response to contextual challenges such as high levels of Covid-19 related mortality, inequality, and unemployment.

CTAP Nigeria published several research publications analyzing Covid-19 policy responses in Nigeria, the expenditure patterns in Nigeria, the impact of contextual factors on Covid-19 related needs and also presented advocacy options and recommendations not just for improving transparency and accountability of public funds in the time of Covid-19 but also to mitigate the economic effects of the pandemic.

CTAP Nigeria research reports²⁸ revealed a lack of transparency about the methods and processes in which the government is distributing and delivering on several Covid-19 public programs. CTAP Nigeria used these research findings to craft an advocacy message which demanded government

protection of poor, vulnerable, and marginalized communities by meeting the following transparency and accountability requirements:

- Continuing to invest heavily in health, education, and social services and that all states regularly produce Covid-19 spending reports
- Equitably distributing palliatives and conditional cash transfer programs, closing corruption loopholes, and taking corrective action against abuse and mismanaging funding for these programs
- Ensuring that funds are subject to the strict budgetary procedures and controls provided by the code for transparency and good governance in PFM
- Publishing public procurement and beneficial ownership information of contracting companies.

Lesson #3: Advocacy and communication are equally important elements

CTAP Nigeria wants to empower citizens by providing them with vital information that positions them to actively participate and influence governance and decision making at the local level. Both BudgIT and CODE have strategically used data to mobilize citizens at the local level through Tracka and FtM networks to make demands as well as to hold local



As such BudgIT & CODE had to pivot towards relying on radio to engage key audiences outside of the banned social media platforms.

26. This sentiment is also in line with the latest research in the field of transparency and accountability. To see a list of research publications on this topic visit the Governance and Social Development Resource Centre webpage at <https://gsdrc.org/topic-guides/communication-and-governance/access-to-information-and-its-constraints/>

27. The Nigeria CTAP team conducted service delivery tracking of Primary Healthcare Centres in 15 States across Nigeria, to assess their readiness to receive and distribute vaccines. They found that the Nigerian healthcare system has worsened in the wake of the pandemic. As the health sector struggles to meet up with the requirements of basic standards, quality and efficiency. Read more here.

28. CTAP Nigeria published the following research reports accessible at the CTAP website Nigeria: Unintended Consequences of COVID-19 on Vulnerable Groups; Nigeria: Transparency and Accountability during COVID-19 outbreak; Kenya, Ghana & Nigeria: A review on Laws on COVID-19 Resource Management; Nigeria: Primary Health Care and COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution.

governments to account for the abuse of public funds as well as poor service delivery. CTAP Nigeria relied on these grassroots networks to monitor and report the state of primary health care centers across 15 states in Nigeria. CTAP Nigeria mobilized citizens to play the vital role of gathering data on service delivery and engaging local governments, verifying info at the local level, and in turn, used the results of those service delivery tracking activities to demand changes for quality health care infrastructure and services.

CTAP Nigeria has also been strategic in influencing national conversations through their communication strategy so that mobilized citizens are publicly making evidence based demands. As such, CTAP Nigeria has always aimed to adapt and make the research usable for local CSOs and citizens through interactive formats such as infographics and story-telling videos, that make a clear connection between Covid-19 transparency deficiencies and the day to day challenges facing ordinary citizens. They have also leveraged social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter where a large segment of the Nigerian population is actively engaged to provide them with information relevant to their needs and which empowers them to take effective action.

As civic tech organizations, BudgIT and CODE have largely relied on social media and online platforms and less so on the radio up until early June 2021, when Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari announced the indefinite suspension of Twitter in Nigeria. As such BudgIT & CODE had to pivot towards relying on radio to engage key audiences outside of the banned social media platforms. In July 2021, the Nigeria CTAP team established the Follow the Covid Money Radio Show to facilitate a live discussion with citizens on Covid-19 fiscal data by breaking

down their budget advocacy into small topics (corruption, vaccine roll-out, palliatives tracking, cash transfers, etc...)²⁹

Since adopting their communications strategy towards community radio, CTAP Nigeria is communicating and interacting with citizens and communities more directly and more clearly. Furthermore, these direct conversations have opened up new ideas for elevating these direct engagements with citizens

“Based on the engagements and the radio shows that we have had with people, we see that they are very passionate and excited about the Covid issues and we are still yet to tap into that energy and amplify those voices in order to pressure the government to respond...” – Iyanu Bolarinwa, CTAP Nigeria country coordinator

When it comes to government responsiveness, CTAP Nigeria is learning that the most effective way of getting the government to respond is to engage public officials directly.

We have found that reaching out to officials and meeting with them privately is more effective. Public officials are more amenable to providing info and to cooperating with partners when speaking in private. – Busayo Morakinyo, CTAP Nigeria country coordinator

Having witnessed the power of combining civic tech, open data, communications, citizen mobilization, and advocacy – CTAP Nigeria has so far generated a lot of media attention. Ordinary people's interests have peaked and

29. The Follow the Covid Money Radio Show on Nigeria Info FM, Abuja 95.1 FM is every Wednesday. The show promotes the transparency and accountability of Covid intervention funds, provides updates and share information to the general public from their tracking of Covid funds.


they have started to ask questions on radio and social media. They can see how citizens are starting to engage with the evidence and their efforts are stimulating and enriching national conversations.

Going into the second phase of the CTAP project in 2022, CTAP Nigeria will ramp up its use of radio to reach citizens in order to get them asking more questions and make evidence informed demands. In addition to getting citizens to increase public pressure for the government to take action and respond, they plan to pursue high-level advocacy with policy implications. They intend to do this by engaging more with senior government officials in the national and transnational contexts – such as ECOWAS and the African

Union – around their service delivery tracking recommendations for addressing weaknesses in vaccine delivery efforts. However, as committed as they are to pursuing conversations and collaborating with the government, they are not turning a blind eye to wrongdoing. They also plan to continue to demand corrective actions against those who commit Covid-19 fraud and corruption

If the anti-corruption agencies and others are slow in response, We will let them know there is no place to hide...- Iyanu Bolarinwa, CTAP Nigeria country coordinator





The CTAP Sierra Leone story: Lessons for strengthening Covid accountability beyond reforms

No time to celebrate

The government of Sierra Leone has taken steps to apply insights gained from addressing the Ebola outbreak to better prepare their Covid-19 public health response and bolster transparency and accountability mechanisms concerning the allocation and expenditures of Covid-19 funding. In 2015, an audit revealed that the government failed to properly account for almost a third of the money earmarked to fight the Ebola epidemic citing weak emergency procurement and accountability measures that failed to prevent corruption and waste.

The CTAP Sierra Leone coalition³⁰ has collaborated to carry out research, mobilize citizens, and engage government and civil society stakeholders in an effort to uncover corruption and waste, advocate for systemic reforms, and demand effective response to COVID-19. The research³¹ carried out by the

coalition analyzed the country's level of transparency and accountability concerning Covid-19 interventions and it highlighted modest gains in the management and transparency of Covid-19 funding. Their research also highlighted the following areas of progress in the government's management of pandemic funds:

- Additional transparency frameworks were adopted, including the Coronavirus Disease Emergency Fund Regulations (CDEFR) of 2020 which guides the procurement processes and transparency requirements of the National Covid-19 Emergency Response Centre (NaCOVERC)
- The government kept the public informed on funds allocated to the Covid-19 response strategy through regular press briefings and maintained an open and collaborative relationship with civil society working to increase transparency and accountability through the

30. The CTAP project in Sierra Leone is being co-implemented by Alhessan Sesay who is Programs Lead at BudgetIT Sierra Leone and with Follow the Money Sierra Leone initiative led by Daniel Conteh Programs Manager at Sierra Leone Green School Club as well as The Budget Advocacy Network (BAN), which is a network of Civil Society Organisations in Sierra Leone committed to work on budget advocacy and fiscal policies. BAN consists of several local and international organizations - <https://ban-sl.org/about/>

31. The research "Transparency and Accountability during Covid-19 Outbreak in Sierra Leone accessible on the CTAP website under the resources section <https://www.covidfund.africa/resources/documents>

Open Government Partnership

• The Audit Service Sierra Leone (ASSL) with the assistance of the Anti-Corruption Commission carried out an extensive audit³² of the management of Covid-19 funds, by the NaCOVERC and several other government ministries, departments, and agencies.

Despite the level of legal and institutional reforms attained during the pandemic, the research report by CTAP Sierra Leone clearly communicates that now is not the time to celebrate. The research discussed findings from the NACOVERC audit investigation including a large number of serious cases of mismanagement, noncompliance and corruption connected to instances of ghost workers and assets, inflated contracts, payroll violations, among others.³³ Despite many arrests for graft, it remains to be seen if the Executive will follow through with any meaningful prosecution.

Even more worrisome is the fact that the chief auditor, who has been widely praised for her efforts to improve government accountability, has been suspended without cause. This appears to already be a slight regression in the accountability context. It is still yet to be seen whether the Covid-19 fiscal transparency reforms will have an impact on corruption levels and fighting Covid corruption remains a big challenge requiring interventions that go

beyond legal reforms.

Mutual beneficial collaboration between civil society and accountability institutions

According to CTAP Sierra Leone, they are going beyond the legal reforms in their strategy to fight Covid-19 corruption by pursuing formal partnerships with accountability institutions such as the Audit Service, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), and the recently established Parliamentary Budget Office.

CTAP Sierra Leone has been savvy in positioning themselves as valuable partners in the fight against Covid corruption by engaging in advocacy and mobilization efforts that incentivize and pressure the government to take up their recommendations and/or change their behavior.

The Auditor General, the Parliamentary Budget Office and the Anti Corruption Commission have reached out to us to let us know that they really support our CTAP project because it helps them, our interests are aligned. They want to stop corruption and mismanagement and they can see that we can help them - Alhessan Sesay, Country Lead at BudGIT Sierra Leone



The work of accountability institutions is often constrained and undermined by limited resources, institutional culture, and political interference.

³² See Audit Service of Sierra Leone. (2020). Report on the Audit of Funds managed by the National COVID-19 Emergency Response Centre and other Ministries Departments and Agencies; (March to June, 2020)
³³ See pages 20-26 of the research report Country Analysis: Transparency and Accountability during Covid-19 Outbreak in Sierra Leone

CTAP Sierra Leone is facilitating opportunities for accountability institutions to interact with citizens and demonstrating their value by generating data for accountability institutions through their local service delivery tracking activities. Their service delivery methods include site visits and questionnaires with checklists for health care equipment and availability of medicines, interviewing local district health officials, health care workers and health service beneficiaries in 5 regions of the country.

CTAP Sierra Leone recognizes the level of influence of the accountability actors in the governance ecosystem as well as the power these institutions hold when it comes to limiting the opportunities for corruption in the public finance system. Yet, they also recognize

that these institutions cannot act alone and they are limited in what they can do. The work of accountability institutions is often constrained and undermined by limited resources, institutional culture, and political interference.

To date, CTAP Sierra Leone has a formal partnership and signed MoU with the ACC. Going into 2022, they plan to continue pursuing formal partnerships with other accountability institutions as well as other types of institutions including academic institutions and think tanks. With regards to the future of service delivery tracking, they plan on scaling this activity by tracking vaccine delivery as well as public services of health care and cash transfer programs.



