

This contribute aims to look into **citizens' engagement activities** developed within Integrity Pact project carried out by ActionAid Italia.

The IP already provided means of multi-stakeholder participation: the communities affected by (or benefiting from) a project, potential bidders, other government agencies and authorities in charge of formulating policies relevant to the public procurement process, development agencies, in addition to civil society organisations and the media and, through them, the citizens. The means can be: specially targeted public hearings or town-hall meetings, facilitated discussion with the community about the environmental and social impact and characteristics of the monitored project, shared mechanism to access to information using the internet, radio or written media.

The EU Commission program “Integrity Pacts – A Civil Control Mechanism for Safeguarding EU Funds” is piloting an advanced model of IP tool by the involvement of a Civil Society Organization as independent monitor.

There are different social accountability models that a Civil Society Organisation can followed during the implementation of an Integrity Pacts:

1. Civil society monitor with minimal social accountability

It is predominantly monitored the adherence of both the contracting authority and the contractor to the integrity pact signed. The involvement of affected stakeholders is limited to whistleblowing. The communication activities are via digital media or press.

2. Civil society monitor with medium social accountability

Also in this case, it is predominantly monitored the adherence of both the contracting authority and the contractor to the integrity pact. But unlike previous model, there is clear engagement with affected stakeholders beyond whistleblowing. Affected stakeholders could be involved directly by bringing together a group of community representatives or activists or indirectly via local NGOs or social movements that have direct access to affected stakeholders. In this case, the monitor invests time in discussing the progress of the monitoring activities i.e. by presenting the outcome of the monitoring reports and of the site visits and by receiving feedback from citizens. Stakeholders could be also potentially consulted whenever irregularities happen to agree on a collective action plan.

3. Civil society monitor with high social accountability

The monitoring activities are carried out together with affected stakeholders, involved as co-monitors. Unlike the previous model, both the civil society monitor and affected stakeholders work together to have access to the required information, review documents, analyse the information and data, undertake site visits, take part in institutionalised participatory processes, perform social audits and collaborate to raise awareness on a specific issue, such as anti-corruption. Affected stakeholders could also contribute to monitoring reports.

Stakeholders could be involved directly by bringing together a group of community representatives or activists that work jointly with the monitor or indirectly via local NGOs or social movements that have direct access to affected stakeholders and can coordinate their engagement. In this case, the monitor might provide some capacity building to affected stakeholders to allow them an active role as co-monitors.

ActionAid Italy is trying to get from a medium to a high social accountability model. In the IP project From the very beginning, we wanted affected communities to understand the public procurement process and to practice monitoring. Efforts to fight corruption and mismanagement in public procurement should involve also citizens. This is a matter of sustainability and impact. By investing in raising the awareness of citizens and building their capacity, some of those citizens could continue to monitor other public procurement processes after ActionAid will have finished its work. Also, the citizens' engagement maximises the impact because they would be inclined to hold the government to account for the quality of the services provided by investing public funds.

AA Italy wanted to involve the local communities living around the monitored projects. We did a preliminary stakeholder mapping, focusing on sectors that are somehow linked to the project such as the cultural sector, local tourism, anti-mafia movement, active citizenship and local development. We first identified a short list of trusted and verified people belonging to personal networks of partner organisations and asked them to recommend or involve other trusted people. At first, we identified 300 local contacts belonging to different communities - mainly from academia and civil society.

We started with a **one-week field visit** and **two rounds of phone interviews**.

During the field visit in July 2016 we undertook 14 face-to-face meetings with 24 people from different municipalities and from different backgrounds: researchers, teachers, university professors, students and activists in local associations who work on many issues such as legal rights, cultural heritage, tourism and active citizenship.

After these meetings we created a shortlist from the 300 previously-identified contacts. Based on feedback received during these meetings, we decided to organise a serie of civic monitoring labs.

From July to September 2016, we had two rounds of phone interviews with each of the shortlisted contacts to discuss

- different communities they could involve
- main issues in which they and their communities are interested
- topics that they want to teach and/or learn during the civic monitoring labs
- other people they think should be involved
- preferred logistics arrangement for the civic monitoring labs.

The phone interviews helped us identify the contents of the first lab to be on public procurement, EU funding, digital tools for transparency.

In February 2017 we developed **civic monitoring regulations** that every civic monitor had to sign in order to avoid the risk of potential conflicts of interest that civic monitors may have.

The regulations also helped to show that we are taking citizens' engagement seriously and also got civic monitors to demonstrate their commitment by signing the regulations.

The civic monitor regulations includes basic information about civic monitors (name, contact details, occupation, potential conflicts of interest and formal and non-formal membership in political parties or associations) and clauses such as:

- Declaration that participation in civic monitoring activities in a personal capacity, without any interest other than that relating to the public good;
- Acceptance that the only objective of the civic monitoring is to produce evidence-based community monitoring reports focusing solely on the monitored interventions;

- Duty to not disclose or disseminate information acquired through civic monitoring activities before the deliberative meetings; etc.

Civic monitoring labs

They are structured as training of trainers to allow civic monitors involved to share the acquired knowledge and skills with other citizens. Given the technical nature of public procurement, we first identified **a set of knowledge and skills** that citizens need to have in order **to perform their civic monitoring role**.

There were 3 labs until now and we have dealt with the following topics: national legislation on public procurement and transparency, EU planning, governance of cultural heritage, structure and content of the IP and monitoring agreement, digital tools to use open data related to tenders, tools for crowd-mapping activities i.e. OpenStreetMap. Since the beginning, the lawyer and archaeologist consultant have been explaining the main administrative and technical aspects of the awarded contract including the key features of the winning offer. There were also meetings between civic monitors, Contracting Authority and Museum's director.

Since the beginning, we have been using also **webinars** to build the knowledge base of civic monitors and to keep them abreast of project developments. We have offered a series of webinars in order to equip people with a strong knowledge base on integrity pacts.

The provided activities for the last two years of the pilot project are other two labs (one for each year), site visits, discussion on monitoring reports and on a civic monitoring handbook, webinars.

How to get citizens interested in engagement?

- **simplifying the vocabulary and linking the project to economic development**

We had to simplify the vocabulary and the message by linking the project's goal to economic development rather to anti-corruption as abstract values. People are not primarily interested in the archaeological value of the site, rather care more about how the archaeological value of Sybaris will foster social and economic development in the region.

- **highlighting the binding nature of IP**

We highlighted the binding nature of the IP and monitoring agreement, the commitment by the EU-Commission and the credibility of partner organisations. This increased citizens' level of trust in the project and increased their willingness to engage.

- **using capacity building as an incentive**

Stakeholder often think that the project can give them knowledge and experience on how to advocate on other issues. It is an opportunity for people to have access to new set of knowledge and skills including how to use new tools for monitoring public funds related also to other issues such as environmental protection, waste-management, health, anti-mafia etc.

- **including some clauses aimed at giving useful tools to civic monitors**

The IP includes clauses relating to the publication of open data about companies involved in the project, to civic monitoring activities and to public debates organised by citizens.

Lesson learned

- **Create avenues for interaction between citizens and public authorities**

Such meetings offer an opportunity for both parties to get closer, build trust and collaboration. For civic monitors, it was important to listen first hand to the CA and other public officials about their plans and the challenges they face. For the CA, it was good to listen to civic monitors, who represent the wider constituency that will benefit from the project, and to observe their commitment and curiosity. The civic monitoring labs also prepare citizens for interactions with public authorities.

- **Be transparent with civic monitors, be clear about the role of monitor**

Citizens, especially committed ones like civic monitors, can be very emotional because they are voluntarily putting in time and money. In May 2017 the CA did give us very short notice to comment on tender documents to be published. AA Italy reported this irregularity to the CA and immediately informed the civic monitors in order to mitigate the reputational risk. We held a webinar with civic monitors and explained clearly the terms of the IP and the escalation steps to do in case of red flags.

- **Make use of citizens' skills**

We identify and use the knowledge and skills that people already have at the beginning of engagement, so that we can eventually use them later on.

- **Let citizens define the agenda**

AA Italy has found consultations with civic monitors very useful. They gave us many good ideas i.e. to identify the topics to be covered in civic monitoring labs and how to communicate the project to other citizens.

- **Make capacity building social, fun and engaging**

The theoretical legal and technical trainings on public procurement and the analysis of documents can become very boring. We organise social events with civic monitors at bars or restaurants as part of labs or during field visits. These events add a social element to engagement, increase trust amongst civic monitors and between them and us and contribute to building a shared identity.