

Fourth Annual Report Web Update

GTF142 Overseas Development Institute

The Mwananchi Programme brings together key interlocutors of the citizen-state relationship – civil society organisations, the media and elected representatives – to strengthen citizen participation in governance across six African countries. This year in Malawi, Uganda, Zambia, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone and Ghana, the Mwananchi Programme issued small learning grants to 56 local media and civil society organisations, averaging £4000 per grantee for activities, in addition to a similar amount granted last year. These grants will be topped up in next year (third one year round) to continue scaling up good practice and deepen what works; this will include sharing lessons with other organisations working on similar things. Each grantee acts as a coalition leader, bringing together other actors including members of parliament, local councillors, media and traditional leaders as agents of change for greater citizen voice and government accountability.

The programme has seen many good examples of innovative ways of working on governance issues with disadvantaged groups, such as the disabled, youths and children, enabling citizen voice and accountability in the process. Small amounts of money can achieve significant impacts, particularly when building on previous work. For example, Basic Needs (one of the 11 GTF grantees in Ghana) reported successful influence on the passage of the Mental Health Bill in parliament in February 2012. This success has become a basis for the estimated 2.4 million mental health people and their carers to demand their rights for access to health care and protection from abuse. In this case, Basic Needs' provision of critical research-based evidence to parliamentarians, in the form of a photobook, provided the critical pressure point for the bill to be passed. However, this was achieved also through sustained discussions on the media platforms that Basic Needs worked with, activities of a coalition of CSOs working on mental health and also pressure on individual members of parliament, among other things. STAR Ghana, a new multi-donor governance fund in Ghana, funded some of the actual meetings of MPs to prepare for the parliamentary debate.

In the upcoming year, the programme will build on the early gains made in the past year. The same grantees will be supported to deepen their innovativeness and actively share what works with other organisations within their countries and in the broader Africa region. The programme will put more emphasis on sharpening grantees' ability to scan the political context and work strategically with citizens to engage with varying political dynamics. Mwananchi partners will actively discuss the politics of using research-based evidence, and the programme will seek to scale and promote good practice in this area – especially in terms of increased voice and accountability.

For more information please visit the ODI website <http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid> and the Mwananchi Programme Website: <http://www.mwananchi-africa.org>

Mwananchi Ethiopia helps the marginalised to get their voice heard



CAPTION: Person with disability engaged in micro-enterprise (handicraft) for a living (Photo by Association of Persons with Disabilities Guraghe Zone).