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CENTRE FOR ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE AND
ACCOUNTABILITY IN AFRICA

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Foreword by the Executive Director

Another year of development work has ended, and we continue to advance our strategy to best impact the world through our resource-tracking efforts in Africa and elsewhere. CEGAA supports ideas that fit in with our mission to influence public finance decisions and improve policy implementation for better community health outcomes and livelihoods.

Having come out of the COVID-19 situation which delayed a lot of CEGAA activities on 2021/22, we saw a very busy year in 2022/23, as our teams tried to catch up on the delays and to fast-track some of the activities important to achieve programme objectives. The 2021/22 delays also meant some delays in 2022/23 planned activities, as we still needed to ensure delayed activities were implemented.

For South Africa, it was hard to catch up on the delayed activities as provincial officials had other pressing issues to attend to due to the COVID-9 pressures. Some provinces needed a high-level approval letter from the national government for CEGAA to cascade technical support to their districts. Such approval could not be secured so the CEGAA team continued to work in provinces and districts that did not need such approval.

For the Right2Grow project implemented in six countries, delays meant slow implementation of budget advocacy work to improve food security, nutrition, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) policies, budgets, and services. However catch-up plans were made, and teams in all six countries put their best foot forward to generate budget evidence and started using it to influence budget-making decisions and implementation. Some great outcomes were already harvested of the budget advocacy efforts, and some will be shared in this report.

Working with our partners in the Right2Grow countries has re-emphasised the importance of local ownership and flexibility. This required us to understand the pace and knowledge level of each country so we could provide technical support accordingly. We also needed to acknowledge that different countries present different socio-economic and political contexts, which required adaptive strategies to implement the project for impact.

We remain indebted to our funding and strategic partners for their contributions to our work. CEGAA highly appreciates both the funding and technical support from our partners, and remains committed to the capacity enhancement, evidence generation for budgeting, efficient implementation of public policy, and advocacy agendas that seek to benefit the public.

Nhlanhla Ndlovu

Executive Director, CEGAA

1. About Us

REFLECTION ON CEGAA'S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The organisation was formed to respond to the needs of African states and organisations requiring skills and support in budget monitoring and expenditure tracking (BMET) of health financing in general, and HIV/AIDS funding in particular. CEGAA has expanded its scope beyond its first mission on HIV/AIDS work and has accumulated vast experience in BMET in different fields and topics, working in East and Southern Africa. Our work has supported governments, international financing institutions, international organisations, and civil society partners in various places around the world. CEGAA is using its expertise to support the partners to enhance their capacity in resource tracking to improve both social and financial accountability and the resultant realization of human rights through good quality service delivery.

Mission

To contribute to the attainment of efficient and equitable public financing in Africa to enable a comprehensive response to ill-health and poverty by contributing to an empowered civil society and skilled public service, through trainings or capacity enhancements, research, and advocacy with and by civil society, government, and legislatures.

Vision

Our vision is for a world where the economic policies and financial systems allow for effective economic governance in governments in Africa and elsewhere, that lead to improved quality of life and health for people, particularly for those affected by poverty and ill-health, and other development problems.

The strategic result pillars of CEGAA are:

- Enhanced stakeholder capacity to engage in resource-tracking efforts (Training and technical support).
- Improved generation and use of high-quality evidence for effective and efficient allocations and spending on public needs (Evidence generation and utilisation).
- Increased multi-stakeholder participation in government budgeting and expenditure processes (Participation providing key budget engagement opportunities at various levels).
- Increased budget allocations & spending for a multi-sectoral developmental response to ill-health and poverty (Enhanced domestic financing and reduced donor dependency for sustainability).
- Increased transparency and accountability of governments and other stakeholders for public spending (Open governmental and non-governmental budgets).

2. Staff affairs and governance

STAFF AFFAIRS AND ORGANISATIONAL WELLBEING

The CEGAA team is made up of a Board of Trustees responsible for overall governance and oversight of the organisation, ensuring proper policies, systems and processes are in place for good governance and efficient performance on CEGAA's mission and vision. On the operational level CEGAA has a wide range of skilled personnel, including administrative and financial staff, health economics and public finance experts, programme development managers, and French translators working in the multi-country Right2Grow project.

The CEGAA Board of Trustees remains the core governance structure of the organisation, with support from CEGAA's management committee. The board ensures good governance through sound organisational policies and practice. CEGAA's executive director reports to the board and plays a supervisory and management role of the entire staff complement of the organisation.

Policies are in place to protect CEGAA staff and its clients or stakeholders from any form of abuse or inappropriate behaviour. Disciplinary measures are in place to ensure that inappropriate behaviour is punished. Such behaviour may include verbal and non-verbal action, such as sexual harassment, verbal abuse, or any form of action by a CEGAA member that is seen as offensive to the other, including women and children. CEGAA does not tolerate inappropriate behaviour and will take all necessary action, including suspension, firing and legal procedures in a court of law to punish such behaviour.

CEGAA's organisational culture allows for an environment of learning and high-quality performance whilst simultaneously ensuring staff well-being and protection from any form of danger or harm in the workplace.



3. Overview of CEGAA Activities

MISSION MOMENT

CEGAA works towards attaining effective, rights-based, and developmental public financing for well-being through active public participation in budget processes and increased efficacy in the use of financial resources by governments. Our objectives of creating or enhancing civil space in budget matters and improving budget accountability continue to drive our efforts. There has been a growing recognition of our work, though non-financially, also seen through many invitations to speak at conferences and webinars. We also remain committed to budget transparency, accountability, and civil society participation in budget matters as guiding principles for open and democratic systems.

RIGHT2GROW (R2G) PROGRAMME

BMET took off quite steadily but tactically in most countries, with serious delays in Ethiopia due to the conflict situation in the country. Needs assessment, capacity development planning, and capacity strengthening activities were conducted in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Mali, Uganda, and South Sudan. Practical analyses and stakeholder engagements were implemented at various levels in the countries, with South Sudan and Uganda taking the lead in achieving BMET-related objectives.

Challenges faced related mainly to delays caused by COVID-19 and the political situation in Ethiopia. Specific BMET related challenges related to the unavailability of disaggregated budget and expenditure data for nutrition and WASH programmes in most country, requiring that advocacy is directed at demanding transparency in budget allocations and accountability in actual spending which could be improved by having clear budget line-items for nutrition and WASH interventions.

The good news relates to efforts already made to raise awareness on nutrition and WASH budget matters; understanding of capacity gaps to do proper budget advocacy; development of training curricula to build and strengthen budget advocacy capacity; identification of government documents to find and analyse relevant nutrition and WASH budget information; deepening of budget analysis exercises for evidence generation,

and; creation of civic space and enhancing capacity for budget advocacy discussions and stakeholder engagements.

More in-depth budget data hunting, analysis and advocacy conducted led to informed stakeholder engagements and advocacy debates.

Our best civil society empowerment examples for 2022/23 come from South Sudan. The BMET partner organisation there, Child Rights Coalition of South Sudan (CRC), led numerous budgeting activities involving both the R2G members and local partners. Engagements with the government and parliament led to improved needs identification and prioritization, as well as consideration of civil society inputs in the budget debates in parliament. It was feared that the political situation of South Sudan would not allow for civil engagement on budget process matters. Surprisingly the South Sudan Parliament and senior government executives found the work led by CRC to be eye-opening and important to challenge and improve government processes and systems. Hence, the Right2Grow consortium, being led by CRC on budget matters, was invited to participate in ongoing budget processes in Parliament, allowing for R2G evidence to be shared and debated on this platform.

Summary of the key learnings

We have identified the following as important factors for effective programming:

- Joint ownership and collaboration led to strategic adjustments and reprioritisation of actions amid challenges such as COVID-19.
- True ownership requires partners to work in synchrony to ensure programme efficiency and effectiveness. This is necessary even though it may lead to delays as partners may not act at similar speed or pace, based on varying circumstances.
- Importance of space for partners at country level to lead in defining programme priorities and roadmaps for achieving them; capacity assessment and skills building for partners on different programmatic topics are important to instill full ownership and ensure strategic implementation of the programme, and sustainability when the programme comes to an end.



FINANCIAL CAPACITY BUILDING AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR PROVINCES (FINCAP)

The FINCAP project has continued to provide a support service to provincial and district health managers on financial planning, budgeting, and reporting for HIV in South Africa. However, there has been some disappointment with slow response from provincial governments in terms of facilitating engagement between the FINCAP team and districts. A letter of approval from the national health head of department was needed by several provinces to allow FINCAP work to cascade down to districts. Unfortunately, this letter was not received, and the team had to work in an adaptive and strategic manner to continue providing support to provinces and districts that did not need such approval of the national department.

The FINCAP team is very adaptive and keeps exploring other avenues to get the work done at the district and provincial level. However, though the focus was moving to districts, some provincial HIV offices still needed support, but more from the sustainability point of view. Because of staff turnover in the health departments provincial health teams required some training and support on financial planning, management, and reporting. This included the Western Cape which did not need any support for some time.

The funder has provided funding for yet another year (2023) to consolidate all the FINCAP efforts and to handover the technical support role to relevant officials in the national and provincial health departments. This is an ongoing exercise as the FINCAP team has been working together with government officials and handing over some responsibilities already to the national HIV unit team members.

Moving forward, because most district issues emanate from the provincial government, it is essential that the FINCAP team maintains its contact with provincial managers to assist in reducing those process and system issues. This is more important as the FINCAP scope expands beyond HIV, to include the general health system and other healthcare priorities funded from both conditional grants and equitable share allocations.

4. CEGAA strategic review

An organisational strategic review was conducted during the year to determine where CEGAA is regarding its mission, vision and strategic objectives, and to draw a roadmap for CEGAA's future.

CEGAA'S STRATEGIC FOCUS

The CEGAA team (Board members and staff members) agreed that changing the name in 2017 broadened CEGAA's impact to beyond HIV/AIDS by focusing on other public health matters, including maternal and child health, education and even research and development topics. The focus in South Africa is still on HIV, working with the Department of Health on the FINCAP project. But work outside South Africa focuses on other topics, such as maternal, child and adolescent health, malaria, health research and development investments, food security, nutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). Efforts are being made to expand our civil society work by engaging with community-led development partners to strategically cascade CEGAA's BMET approach to local communities outside South Africa.

CEGAA'S FUNDING STATUS

The team discussed in length the status of funding for the organisation, also touching on how the organisation can innovate to generate income. A concern was expressed that CEGAA does not have enough funders, and thus poses a threat to job security and expansion to new horizons. Suggestions were made to build capacity for consultancy services, and to develop a plan and a task team to look at other potential opportunities.

EXPLORING OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

The team also explored a question of how it can explore and take advantage of opportunities with local municipalities given the reported financial management sagas in many municipalities, including fruitless and wasteful expenditures amounting to billions per year. The team planned to consult the State of Local Development Report 2021 to identify problems and identify opportunities for CEGAA interventions with the local municipalities.

To expand its resource base, CEGAA also identified an opportunity to include other regions such as western and global regions in its map of operation, as the Right2Grow programme already providing opportunity to work outside the Africa region, i.e. supporting Bangladesh with technical support on BMET. Other opportunities were also identified, such as tracking resources for disaster management, e.g. flooding in KwaZulu-Natal Province in South Africa, which is becoming a recurring problem in South Africa and elsewhere due to climate change.

TO improve CEGAA's consultancy opportunities the team agreed to find skills development funding - this to be included as part of all proposal development activities of CEGAA.



5. Finances



FINANCES AND AUDIT STATEMENT

CEGAA has sustained a healthy funding outlook for 2022/23, despite an upcoming reduction in R2G and FINCAP funding for 2023/24. Underspent funds from 2021/21 will however cover the shortfall for 2023/24 to ensure all needed technical support is provided to our partners and clients.

CEGAA has achieved a clean financial audit for 2022/23 and strives to improve its policies and procedures to sustain its diligent financial management and reporting.

The full audit report is attached to this report.