ENDLINE EVALUATION OF ACCOUNTABILITY FOR WATER

ABRIDGED VERSION

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Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ABBREVIATIONS

AfW	Accountability for Water
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
GAG	Global Advisory Groups
KEWASNET	Kenya Water and Sanitation CSO Network
KII	Key Informant Interview
MoWIE	Ministry of Water Irrigation and Energy
MoW	Ministry of Water
MoWSI	Ministry of Water Sanitation and Irrigation
NAG	National Advisory Groups
PASGR	Partnership for African Social Governance Research
PI	Principal Investigator
PRF	Professional Research Fellowships
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SWM	Shahidi Wa Maji
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WWE	Water Witness Ethiopia
WWI	Water Witness International

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The Accountability for Water programme was funded by the William and Hewlett Foundation. The mission of the consortium is to improve accountability for water, sanitation and hygiene service delivery and water resources management globally, and in three priority target countries of Kenya, Tanzania, and Ethiopia, through research uptake, action, and advocacy. The consortium is supported and advised by Global and National Advisory Groups comprising national government representatives, civil society, funders, and research institutions.

Key findings:

The program's comprehensive approach effectively addressed both community dynamics and duty bearer dynamics, elevating the level of water accountability. By capturing community voices, understanding bottom-up dynamics, and engaging diverse stakeholders, the program promoted awareness, knowledge generation, and partnerships. Collaborative efforts in Tanzania and Zimbabwe illustrate the positive impact on improving government understanding of water and sanitation issues and triggering responses.

The program aimed to create an ecosystem of water accountability. Despite facing sustainability challenges, it stimulated critical discussions and actions, particularly through media involvement. The inclusive approach in Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Kenya, engaging diverse stakeholders and disseminating research findings, contributed to building a shared understanding of challenges and potential solutions, fostering collaboration and water accountability.

The AfW Programme demonstrated significant effectiveness across multiple fronts, notably in:

i. **Knowledge Generation and Sharing:** The program's focus on knowledge generation through skills-building workshops, PRF training, and cross-country studies enhanced understanding and translated knowledge into concrete actions. Collaboration and networking initiatives ensured sustained knowledge development, fostering a broader understanding of water accountability issues.

ii. **Inspiring Legacy and Capacity Building:** Efforts related to legacy, capacity building, and a community of practice for water accountability research inspired young researchers and empowered a new generation of professionals dedicated to addressing water accountability challenges. The program activities played a pivotal role in promoting research leadership and lasting relationships, driving positive change.

iii. Challenges encountered by the program require attention, including variations in research quality, time management, meeting scheduling difficulties, communication issues, and financial transparency. Raising awareness and sensitization of duty bearers and accountability challenges within the water sector is essential for maximizing impact and ensuring the long-term sustainability of water accountability initiatives.

iv. **Efficiency Evaluation:** The evaluation focused on program efficiency, covering cost-effectiveness, delays in activities, resource utilization, and training effectiveness. It revealed mixed perceptions about cost-effectiveness, with concerns about budget limitations and suggestions for improvement. Delays were noted in research preparation, output drafting, and dissemination. Some believed time and finances were efficiently managed, while others highlighted areas for improvement. Positive feedback was received on training and capacity building, particularly for capacity building, networking, and resource access. Clear communication and addressing potential delays were emphasized to enhance program efficiency.

v. **Sustainability and Scalability Strategies:** The program adopted strategies for sustainability and scalability, emphasizing local empowerment and capacity building to ensure knowledge and practices persisted beyond the project's conclusion. Partnerships and networks played a significant role in securing resources and creating a community of practice. Integration of research findings into long-term strategies and alignment with partner organizations' goals reinforced sustainability. Complementing existing initiatives, expanding to other countries, and leveraging partnerships and resources were key to the program's approach to sustainability and scalability. The program aimed to make water accountability a lasting and mainstream commitment within national and global practices.

vi. **Program Influence and Innovative Arrangements:** The AfW Program significantly improved participants' ability to address water accountability issues and enhanced their confidence in discussing water governance. It also empowered them with research design and delivery skills, extending their capacity beyond the water sector.

In evaluating the program's innovative arrangements:
- The GAG approach provided valuable support but lacked a formal oversight role, resulting in a less active oversight body than initially envisioned.
- The NAG approach effectively engaged with government entities but faced scheduling and sustainability challenges.
- The PMT structure demonstrated resilience and collaboration but encountered budget management issues and leadership changes.
- The PRF approach brought valuable research skills but faced challenges related to analysis, research deadlines, and variable commitment.

Recommendations:

General recommendations focus on diverse meeting formats, securing government commitments, enhancing budget transparency, fostering an open challenge culture, and ensuring prompt publication of research findings. Key components include robust monitoring and evaluation, cross-sector collaboration, community engagement, accessible research data, technological innovation, and long-term impact assessment.

Changes for the next phase should include operational agreements, common learning platforms, addressing ownership concerns, a stronger focus on action, implementation of advocacy plans, and the establishment of regional offices.

Best practices requiring further enhancement encompass the continuation of successful initiatives, awareness programs, effective partnerships, policy impact, knowledge-sharing efforts, advocacy campaigns, cross-generational learning, and ongoing capacity building. These practices should be extended and integrated to foster sustained positive impacts in the water governance sector.

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Information

Introduction

The Accountability for Water programme is an initiative aimed at improving water governance and service delivery, as well as accelerating the achievement of the SDG 6: *Ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.* The programme is designed to address weak accountability in water policies, laws, and programs, as this is often the reason why good water policies fail. The programme has the potential to improve water management in all contexts and promote accountability among all water users and managers.

The first phase of the Accountability for Water programme aimed to produce applicable research for uptake by organizations and professionals working in water resource management and WASH service delivery. Engagement with over 160 stakeholders has identified the themes for exploration, which include enabling and sustaining accountability for water, accountability for communities, and accountability for government. The programme also organized peer-to-peer learning workshops and webinar, and regional events, publishable practice papers, methodological guidance and case studies, and an online knowledge sharing platform.

The programme supported case study research through Professional Research Fellowships (PRFs), with the initial focus on Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, and three other African countries (Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Liberia) as well as Cross-country research involving Kenya, Ethiopia, and Tanzania and was co-led by the PIs, the NRCs and the Research Practice Lead.

The Accountability for Water programme was funded by the William and Hewlett Foundation and implemented by the Accountability for Water Consortium, comprising Partnership for African Social Governance Research (PASGR), Water Witness International (WWI), Water Witness Ethiopia (WWE), Kenya Water and Sanitation CSO Network (KEWASNET), and Shahidi Wa Maji (SWM). The mission of the consortium is to improve accountability for water, sanitation and hygiene service delivery and water resources management globally, and in three priority target countries of Kenya, Tanzania, and Ethiopia, through research uptake, action, and advocacy. The consortium is supported and advised by Global and National Advisory Groups comprising national government representatives, civil society, funders, and research institutions.

The overarching goal for accountability for water programme is contribute to unlocking enduring and widespread water security for vulnerable communities in Africa through well-informed, strategic action to strengthen citizen voice, government responsiveness and water sector accountability.
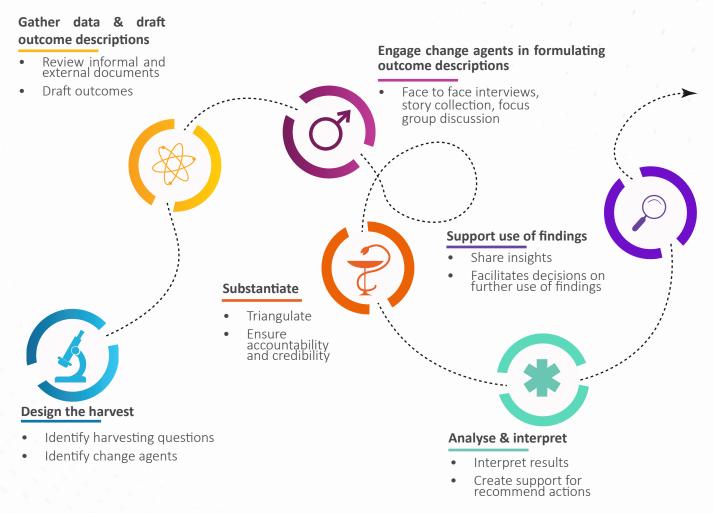
The programme outcomes were; firstly, to generate high quality evidence that addresses priority knowledge needs and questions facing stakeholders, enabling them to strengthen accountability for water (Knowledge generation). Secondly, research evidence shared in formats useful to stakeholders to advance accountability for water at the local, national, and international scale (Outreach and uptake) and finally, researchers and practitioners in Africa and globally are better equipped, inspired, networked and thus able to collaborate and advance accountability policy and practice on water in the future (Programme legacy)

1.2. Evaluation Approach and Design

The purpose of the AfW evaluation was to facilitate a critical analysis of the programme's contribution to evidence-based changes, in relation to strengthening accountability for water *(Knowledge generation);* knowledge sharing with stakeholders to advance accountability for water at the local, national and international scale *(Outreach and uptake)*; and finally, equipping and inspiring researchers and practitioners globally and in Africa to be able to collaborate and advance accountability policy and practice on water in the future *(Programme legacy).*

The AfW end-line Evaluation applied an outcome harvesting approach which involved generation of primary data using a mix of quantitative (stakeholder survey) and qualitative methods (key informants' interviews and review of data from secondary sources namely webinars, the AfW knowledge platform, and PRF reports). Outcome harvesting can be a powerful approach for those interventions whose success depends on influencing policies, practices, actions, and relationships such as those of advocacy interventions especially in documenting and learning about the achievements of interventions. It is a six-step process (See Figure 1) which requires high participation from those who are close to the action and able to create actionable insights based on the needs of the users. The findings from outcome mapping are a mix of quantitative (number of outcomes) and qualitative data (describing the outcomes, change agent contribution, and other important outcome dimensions). One superior aspect of outcome harvesting approach over the traditional evaluation approach is that it does not measure progress towards outcomes, but rather collects evidence of what has been achieved, and works backward to determine whether and how the project or intervention contributed to the change.

Figure 1: Diagrammatic representation of outcome harvesting's six step processe

Gather data & draft outcome descriptions

- Review informal and external documents
- Draft outcomes

Engage change agents in formulating outcome descriptions

- Face to face interviews, story collection, focus group discussion

Support use of findings

- Share insights
- Facilitates decisions on further use of findings

Substantiate

- Triangulate
- Ensure accountability and credibility

Design the harvest

- Identify harvesting questions
- Identify change agents

Analyse & interpret

- Interpret results
- Create support for recommend actions

Source: Wilson-Grau (2019).

2.1. Profile of Stakeholder Survey's Participants

The evaluation was able to capture responses from the key stakeholders of the accountability for water programme among the 45 successfully completed outcome survey forms. The composition of the pool of respondents is as shown below. Majority of the responses recorded were from the PRF and PI group (34%). The category of responses, classified as others were persons coming in as: Freelancers, Independent Consultant, Enterprise, Volunteers, Accountability for Water Trainee, Researcher, and academician.

Figure 2: Category of Respondents

Category	Percentage
NRC , Professional Research Fellows and PIs	34.1 %
Others	18.2 %
PMT or AfW Consortium Partner Staff	18.2 %
Global Advisory Group Member	15.9 %
National Advisory Group Member	13.6 %

2.2. Relevance of the AfW Programme

2.2.1. Alignment of the Programme to Key Identified Themes for Exploration

The program's alignment with key themes for exploration encompassed three key response areas:

1. ***Community Dynamics for Accountability:*** The program focused on understanding and engaging with local communities to enhance water accountability. It succeeded in capturing and comprehending community voices, recognizing the importance of institutionalizing effective accountability mechanisms within government systems. Community engagement was a central theme, emphasizing the significance of bottom-up approaches in addressing water accountability. The program adapted to diverse community dynamics, highlighting context-specific challenges and a commitment to ongoing evaluation and improvement. It contributed to advocacy, raised awareness, and highlighted the need to translate research findings into actionable outcomes.

2. ***Duty Bearer Dynamics for Accountability:*** The program's approach in addressing duty-bearer dynamics was fruitful, particularly in Tanzania, where it improved government officials' understanding of water and sanitation issues. Challenges existed in engaging duty bearers due to the program's CSO-driven nature, but the establishment of an advisory board enhanced collaboration. The program identified incentives, such as media and community voices, for duty bearers to respond. It explored complexities in water resource governance, highlighting issues like state capture and policy implementation challenges. The program aimed to address policy gaps, triggering government responses in areas like improved water disconnection procedures in Zimbabwe. Knowledge generation and dissemination were successful, but the transition from knowledge to action needed improvement.

3. ***Enabling and Sustaining Environment of Accountability for Water:*** The program aimed to establish an ecosystem fostering water accountability. Respondents emphasized the importance of awareness, training, and building sustained engagement. While clear sustainability results were not evident, the program triggered accountability discussions and actions, with media involvement indicating growing interest. Professional Research Fellows from various countries highlighted citizen participation, evidence generation, and relationship-building with stakeholders as steps in ensuring sustainability. The program's impact on raising awareness, fostering partnerships, and promoting human rights-based approaches was recognized. Sustainability challenges persist, and the importance of ongoing dialogue and capacity building in the water sector was emphasized.

2.2.2. Contribution of the Programme to Needs and Priorities of Water Governance and WASH Sectors in the Priority Countries

The program effectively addressed the water governance and WASH sector needs and priorities in priority countries (Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Liberia) by:

Country	Contribution to the needs and priorities of the water governance and WASH
Ethiopia	• **Generating Strong Evidence and Dissemination:** The programme in Ethiopia played a significant role in generating strong evidence related to the accountability ecosystem within the water governance and WASH sector. This evidence was then disseminated widely to stakeholders through various channels and platforms. This contributed to building a knowledge base and fostering accountability within the sector. • **Engagement of Diverse Stakeholders:** The programme was effective in engaging a diverse range of stakeholders. It brought together government decision-makers, politicians, duty-bearers, civil society organizations, and even the private sector. This inclusive approach allowed for a comprehensive dialogue on water governance and accountability. • **Policy and Political Economic Analysis:** Research conducted as part of the programme included policy and political economic analysis. This analysis provided insights into how political, economic, and social factors impact accountability and drive change within the sector. It helped stakeholders understand the multifaceted nature of the challenges.
Tanzania	• **Community Involvement and Monitoring:** In Tanzania, the programme had a strong focus on involving communities in the water governance process. It established a system of "water witnesses" or "Mashahidi wa maji" recruited from local communities. These witnesses played a crucial role in monitoring water resources and reporting issues, particularly related to water pollution. • **Engagement of Diverse Stakeholders:** Ethiopia, the programme in Tanzania also engaged diverse stakeholders. It included government officials, community members, and civil society organizations. This broad engagement allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and priorities within the Tanzanian water sector. • **Sharing Facts and Findings Across Stakeholders:** The programme facilitated the sharing of research facts and findings across the water sector stakeholders. This approach helped in building a common understanding of the issues and potential solutions, fostering collaboration and accountability.
Kenya	• **Bringing Key Stakeholders Together:** In Kenya, the programme succeeded in bringing together key stakeholders through various platforms, including the National Advisory Group (NAG) and water governance houses. These platforms provided opportunities for researchers to present their projects and receive feedback from stakeholders. • **Regulatory Board and County Wash Program Engagement:** The programme engaged with institutions such as the Water Service Regulatory Board and the County WASH Program in Kenya. These institutions expressed commitment to addressing accountability issues highlighted by the programme's research. While concrete actions were pending, the engagement was seen as a positive step.
Liberia	• **Awareness and Accountability Promotion:** In Liberia, the programme recognized the significant accountability gap within the water sector. It aimed to raise awareness and promote accountability in service delivery. While acknowledging that there was more work to be done, the programme engaged with a wide range of stakeholders, including government, international partners, and communities, to initiate discussions and actions related to accountability.

2.3. Effectiveness of the AfW Programme

2.3.1. Key Outcomes and their Impacts towards Attainment of Project's Objectives

Table 1: Outcome Harvesting: Positive Outcomes and their Significance towards Attainment of Sustainable Change

Programme Objective	Key Positive Outcomes: (Progress towards attainment of objective)	Significance of the Positive Outcome: (Evidence that the outcome represents progress towards sustainable change)
1. **Strengthening Accountability for Water (Knowledge Generation)**	• **Skills Building Workshops:** The project organized skills-building workshops in Arusha, Tanzania, and a global event in Mombasa, Kenya. These workshops provided participants with valuable insights and practical skills related to water accountability, enhancing their ability to engage with the issue effectively. • **Professional Research Fellows (PRFs):** The project recruited and trained PRFs from Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania, in partnership with IDS Sussex University, WWI, and PASGR. PRFs received professional support to develop research project proposals, refine research questions, and choose appropriate research methods. This capacity-building process helped PRFs generate comprehensive research reports and other products by the end of the programme. • **Cross-Country Studies:** The project conducted cross-country studies that contributed to the generation of knowledge around accountability for water. These studies likely involved comparative analyses and assessments of water accountability practices and challenges across different regions, providing valuable insights into effective accountability mechanisms.	• **Research Skills Enhancement:** The project has focused on strengthening research writing skills, particularly in the context of water accountability. It conducted training and mentoring to equip researchers with the necessary skills for producing high-quality research outputs. This skill development ensures a lasting resource for future research in the field. • **Body of Research:** The project has successfully generated a significant body of research dedicated to water accountability. This research has been comprehensive, covering various aspects of accountability within the water sector. Importantly, some of these research findings have already been translated into concrete actions, which demonstrates the practical impact of the project's knowledge generation efforts (For example, in Zimbabwe, the project was successful in triggering a government response, leading to improved practices in water disconnection procedures by local authorities. The research empowered citizens with knowledge to demand accountability, emphasizing water as a fundamental right). • **Collaboration and Networking:** The project has actively promoted collaboration and networking within and beyond its immediate scope. This approach ensures that the knowledge generated becomes part of a broader conversation in the water sector. These collaborations contribute to the sustainability of accountability initiatives

Programme Objective	Key Positive Outcomes: (Progress towards attainment of objective)	Significance of the Positive Outcome: (Evidence that the outcome represents progress towards sustainable change)
2. Knowledge Sharing with Stakeholders (Outreach and Uptake)	• **Webinars and In-Person Meetings:** The project actively shared its findings through webinars and in-person meetings. This approach allowed for engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders, both in-person and virtually, facilitating discussions and knowledge dissemination (examples of such forums where knowledge dissemination took place include: the global webinar jointly done by all countries, the Stockholm World Water Week 2023, and the New York Water Conference. In Ethiopia there was a panel discussion presentation on water governance at the 21st International Conference of Ethiopian studies held in Addis Ababa). • **Participation in National and Global Advisory Group Forums (NAGs and GAGs):** The involvement of project members in NAGs and GAGs provided a platform to engage with key stakeholders and share research findings. These advisory groups consisted of experts, policymakers, and practitioners involved in the water sector, enhancing the reach and impact of the project's knowledge sharing efforts. • **Presentations at International Events:** Presentations at events such as UN Water and SIWI (Stockholm International Water Institute) conferences played a crucial role in advancing accountability for water at national and international levels. These presentations reached a global audience and contributed to shaping the discourse on water accountability. • **Reports Dissemination:** The project engaged in extensive dissemination activities, including sharing reports with interested organizations, donors, government entities (GOs), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This ensured that research findings reached a wide array of stakeholders, fostering awareness and understanding of water accountability issues.	• **Improved Understanding:** One of the significant achievements was the positive change in the understanding of accountability for water among government officials and key professionals. Through various knowledge-sharing activities, these stakeholders gained insights into the importance of accountability in the water sector. • **Lasting Skills and Relationships:** The project has not only provided skills development but also fostered lasting relationships with wider networks. This network of professionals, researchers, and stakeholders is likely to continue collaborating and sharing knowledge beyond the project's duration. • **Professional Training:** The project delivered online training to 60 professionals from diverse backgrounds within the water sector. This training equipped them with the knowledge and tools needed to actively contribute to accountability initiatives. • **Research Outputs:** The research conducted has resulted in multiple research papers, cross-country analyses, and policy briefs. These tangible outputs serve as valuable resources for furthering knowledge and informing decision-makers and practitioners in the water sector. • **Effective Outreach:** The project effectively disseminated its knowledge through various means, including webinars, workshops, and conferences. These activities engaged diverse stakeholders, ranging from local to international levels, facilitating the exchange of ideas and best practices. • **Systematic Knowledge Generation:** The project's research systematically identified and explored water accountability problems, confirming existing issues. This systematic approach was instrumental in gaining the trust of governmental bodies, donors, and NGOs. Stakeholders recognized the value of the research findings and recommendations for strengthening accountability mechanisms in the water sector.

Programme Objective	Key Positive Outcomes: (Progress towards attainment of objective)	Significance of the Positive Outcome: (Evidence that the outcome represents progress towards sustainable change)
2. **Knowledge Sharing with Stakeholders (Outreach and Uptake)**		• *Wider Partnership Engagement:* The project's efforts encouraged wider collaboration in research across multiple East African countries. This collaborative approach did not only establish recognized research initiatives but also initiated changes in water accountability practices. • *Impact Measurement:* The project provided hard evidence on how accountability monitoring by community groups and civil society organizations contributes to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6). This evidence-based approach enables development partners, governments, INGOs, and funders to prioritize investments in accountability initiatives effectively. • *Academic Contribution:* The project's research represents a groundbreaking contribution to the academic understanding of accountability science in the water sector. Publications in referenceable journals enhance the credibility and visibility of accountability research. • *Global Recognition and Funding:* Accountability has gained prominence globally, as evidenced by its inclusion in the closing plenary of UN Water 2023 and the allocation of new funding for accountability practice, exceeding £4 million. These developments signal the growing recognition of accountability's importance.

Programme Objective	Key Positive Outcomes: (Progress towards attainment of objective)	Significance of the Positive Outcome: (Evidence that the outcome represents progress towards sustainable change)
3. **Equipping and Inspiring Researchers and Practitioners (Program Legacy):**	• ***Pre-PRF Training:*** The project conducted pre-PRF training on accountability, research methods, and communication. This training was in advance of PRF selection, and included government officials, NGO representatives, private sector experts, and academia. It equipped participants with the necessary conceptual and research skills related to water accountability. • ***Inspiring Young Researchers:*** The project's engagement and dissemination events inspired many young researchers and practitioners to focus their efforts on conducting research related to water accountability. This inspiration likely led to a new generation of professionals dedicated to addressing water accountability challenges. • ***Collaboration Opportunities:*** The project facilitated collaboration opportunities with various stakeholders, including universities, NGOs, donors, and government entities. This collaborative approach aimed to continue research efforts on water accountability and address multifaceted problems in the water sector. • ***Regional and National Impact:*** The project made a regional impact by sharing priorities related to water accountability with UN Water during a regional learning and planning event in Mombasa. It also contributed to the design of the SDG6 Accountability Facility, which can continue to drive accountability efforts in the water sector. • ***Local and International Dissemination:*** The project shared its research findings at both local and international levels through workshops, conferences, and collaborations with governmental and non-governmental organizations. This dissemination aimed to raise awareness of water accountability issues and encourage further research and action.	• ***Research Leadership:*** Project Research Fellows (PRFs) actively led the charge for water accountability in their respective countries. They incorporated accountability principles into various research programs and have used their training and research findings in their educational roles. • ***Community Building:*** The project played a pivotal role in creating a community of practice for water accountability research and practice. This community includes professionals, university educators, researchers, government officials, NGOs, donors, and private sector stakeholders. The ongoing collaboration within this community is expected to drive positive change in water accountability. • ***Inspiration and Advocacy:*** Through its activities and outcomes, the project inspired researchers and practitioners to become advocates for water accountability. It empowered them to amplify the voices of marginalized communities and champion the cause of water accountability. • ***Capacity Building:*** PRFs underwent extensive capacity building, becoming champions of Accountability for Water (AW). They possess in-depth knowledge, clear concepts, and practical expertise in accountability, enabling them to demand transparency, equitable practices, and accountability in the water sector.

Table 1 clearly shows that the project's efforts in knowledge generation, sharing, and capacity building had a significant and diverse impact on promoting water accountability. It developed skills, inspired future professionals, and engaged stakeholders across levels, leaving a lasting legacy in the field. The project's accomplishments mark substantial progress in strengthening water accountability, providing valuable knowledge, and inspiring a new generation committed to driving positive change in the water sector for years to come.

Programme Objective	Key Negative Outcomes: (Deterrence to attainment of objective)	Significance of the Negative Outcome: (Evidence that the outcome undermines progress towards sustainable change)
1. **Strengthening Accountability for Water (Knowledge Generation)**	• **_Variation in Research Quality:_** The responses from the key informants acknowledged that there was variation in the quality of research analyses and writing among project participants (specifically the PRFs). This inconsistency could have hindered the overall effectiveness of the research efforts as research quality was crucial for generating actionable insights and recommendations. • **_Tight Schedules:_** PRFs (Professional Research Fellows) faced challenges due to their existing roles as regular staff in their host organizations. They had to juggle their research responsibilities with their day-to-day work, often resorting to utilizing their spare time, including weekends and leave. This could have potentially affected the depth and thoroughness of their research, as time constraints may have limited their ability to conduct in-depth exploration of issues. Some PRFs utilized the services of research assistants to mitigate against this challenge. • **_Challenges in Scheduling Meetings:_** The difficulty in coordinating meetings with various stakeholders, including senior officials, factory managers, and communities, posed challenges. This could have delayed data collection and engagement with key stakeholders, impacting the research timeline and overall quality.	• **_Knowledge Utilization:_** The key informants for the study reported that while knowledge was acquired, it could have generated stronger evidence to enhance the programme's overall outcomes. There were deficiencies around the extent to which findings from research were disseminated. • **_Time Management Challenges:_** Although time management problems did not have direct negative impacts on knowledge generation, it's implied that there were challenges in managing time effectively. This could have affected the depth and thoroughness of the research conducted, potentially limiting the quality of knowledge produced. • **_Low Workshop Attendance:_** There was acknowledgment that more people attending knowledge-sharing events could have boosted the positive impact points to a potential issue with stakeholder engagement. Low attendance at workshops may have hindered the dissemination of knowledge and the programme's ability to inspire change. •

Programme Objective	Key Negative Outcomes: (Deterrence to attainment of objective)	Significance of the Negative Outcome: (Evidence that the outcome undermines progress towards sustainable change)
2. **Knowledge Sharing with Stakeholders (Outreach and Uptake)**	• *Difficulty in Scheduling Meetings:* Setting dates for meetings involving senior experts and officials was challenging due to the need to accommodate a large number of participants. This scheduling issue could have led to delays in knowledge-sharing activities, potentially affecting the project's outreach efforts. • *Attendance Challenges:* While efforts were made to organize both online and in-person results dissemination meetings, not all invitees attended these events. However, it is noted that those who did participate engaged in lively discussions, suggesting that outreach efforts were partially successful. The challenge here lied in ensuring broader participation in knowledge-sharing activities. • *Communication Issues:* The findings highlighted communication challenges between project partners, particularly between the lead partner and consortium members. This communication difficulty could have hindered effective coordination, especially in discussions with the donor regarding programme extensions and updates for Phase 2. • *Financial Transparency:* The lack of transparency in financial management, particularly from the lead partner, was mentioned as a key area of concern. This lack of transparency had the potential of eroding trust and accountability within the project, potentially affecting its overall success. • *Understanding by Duty Bearers:* The key informants for the study reported that some duty bearers did not fully understand the benefits of the research. This lack of understanding could have hindered their support and engagement with the project's objectives, potentially limiting its impact. • *Sensitization of Stakeholders:* County (sub-national) and national governments, as well as other stakeholders, needed better sensitization about the importance of supporting studies that promote accountability. Without this understanding, gaining their support for accountability initiatives was challenging.	• *Communication and Decision-Making Delays:* Delays in responding to information requests and the resultant confusion regarding grant disbursements, programme timelines, and available funds highlighted communication challenges within the project. These delays could have hindered effective coordination, decision-making, and trust among project partners. This could have therefore directly affected the efficacy of project's outreach plans. • *Accountability Challenges:* The findings laid emphasis on several accountability challenges within the water sector. Citizens' lack of awareness about water as a human right and the prevalence of corruption in water companies suggest deep-seated issues that can obstruct accountability initiatives. Additionally, weak governance structures and a focus on revenue collection over service delivery in water utilities pose further barriers to accountability efforts.

Programme Objective	Key Negative Outcomes: (Deterrence to attainment of objective)	Significance of the Negative Outcome: (Evidence that the outcome undermines progress towards sustainable change)
3. **Equipping and Inspiring Researchers and Practitioners (Program Legacy):**	• **Funding and Resources:** Researchers required adequate resources to conduct their studies effectively. The lack of sufficient funding and stipends for researchers may have limited their ability to dedicate themselves fully to research activities, affecting the quality and depth of their work. • **Opportunities for Publication:** Ensuring that research findings are published and presented is considered part of the programme's legacy. This step is crucial to share knowledge widely and sustain the impact of the research. It's an essential component of creating a lasting legacy. • **Continuous Accountability Awareness:** To create a lasting legacy, it's essential to maintain continuous and heightened awareness on accountability. Civil society players and community groups as well should play a role in this, and efforts should be made to educate citizens about their rights and accountability, potentially even integrating it into school curricula. • **Research Permits and Funds Disbursement:** Delays in obtaining research permits and fund disbursement were noted as challenges. These delays could have compromised research timelines and the ability to execute projects effectively, potentially affecting project outcomes that were time-bound. • **Language Limitations:** While translating and packaging reports and outcomes in Kiswahili language was a valuable effort, it was not without challenges due to language limitations. Overcoming language barriers is important for reaching a broader audience. • **Limited Grassroots Focus:** The project faced a situation where there was more national and global attention but limited grassroots devotion and focus. This imbalance might have affected the sustainability of accountability initiatives at the community level, and addressing this issue is essential for long-term impact.	• **Strategic Interventions and Policy Actors:** The need for more time and strategic interventions to address specific accountability challenges indicates that the project might not have fully anticipated the complexity of these issues. The absence of specific policy actors to address broader challenges suggests a gap in the programme's approach to creating lasting change. • **Lack of a Water Users-Centered Approach:** The mention of a lack of a water users-centered approach implies that the project may not have sufficiently engaged and empowered water users and communities. A user-centered approach is vital for ensuring that accountability efforts align with the needs and expectations of those directly affected by water policies and practices. In Ethiopia for instance, all research products were in English (but translation wasn't part of the design in Ethiopia where Amharic and other widely spoken languages exist)

Table 2: Outcome Harvesting: Negative Outcomes and How they Undermined Progress towards Sustainable Change

In summary, the insights of Table 2 highlight a range of challenges, from knowledge underutilization and time management issues to communication delays and complex accountability obstacles within the water sector. Addressing these challenges is crucial to maximizing the project's impact, fostering collaboration, and leaving a lasting legacy of accountability in the water sector.

2.3.2. Decolonial Governance

Based on the responses provided by the PMT (Program Management Team) and PRF (Professional Research Fellows) respondents, the following were key emerging thematic issues on whether the programme implementation approach was considered sufficiently decolonial:

i. **Mixed Perceptions on Decolonial Approach:** The respondents had mixed opinions regarding whether the programme's implementation approach was sufficiently decolonial. Some believed that it wasn't explicitly designed as a decolonial project, while others saw elements that aligned with decolonization principles.

ii. **Ground-Up Approach:** Some respondents highlighted that the programme adopted a ground-up approach where research questions were determined by PRFs, and local stakeholders were actively involved in shaping the research agenda. This approach was seen as a positive step toward decolonization. *"The research questions were submitted by the PRFs, not predetermined by anybody else. So, it was quite ground up."* ~ PMT Respondent

iii. **Human Rights-Based Approach:** The programme incorporated a human rights-based approach in its research and implementation. This approach aimed to address issues related to discrimination, equitable distribution of resources, and the outdated colonial-era laws that still governed certain aspects of water management.

iv. **Equitable Governance:** Efforts were made to ensure that decision-making and leadership within the programme were equitable and not dominated by external partners. African organizations took the lead in grant management and leadership roles.

v. **Challenges in Implementation:** While there were intentions to decolonize aspects of the programme, there were challenges related to communication breakdowns, financial management, and the perception of external interference, which affected the equitable nature of decision-making. *"There were challenges in communication breakdowns, financial management, and the perception of external interference, affecting equitable decision-making."* ~ PMT Respondent

vi. **Focus on Transparency and Accountability:** The programme emphasized transparency as an element that enables accountability. By promoting transparency, it aimed to empower communities to voice their concerns and demand accountability from duty bearers.

vii. **Need for Further Investment:** Respondents identified the need for more investment and research, particularly in addressing issues related to exploitation, pollution, and marginalized communities. Legal backing and support were considered crucial in addressing these challenges. *"We really need more support in addressing issues related to exploitation, pollution, and marginalized communities."* ~ PRF Respondent

2.4. Efficiency of the AfW Programme

Efficiency refers to timeliness and cost-effectiveness of the activities – i.e., how well the various activities were transformed into planned results and if the implementation costs could be justified. Efficiency was assessed based on the following: cost effectiveness of programme implementation; delays in programme's activities; resource utilization; challenges experienced during implementation; and efficacy of training and capacity building programmes.

2.4.1. Cost Effectiveness of Programme Implementation

In assessing the cost-effectiveness of program implementation, limited information was available from key informants. Responses from a few key informants indicated that the program was perceived as cost-effective. However, concerns were raised about budget limitations potentially hindering its full impact. Adjusting the budget upwards was suggested to reach more groups and achieve more substantial results. Some key informants were uncertain in assessing cost-effectiveness due to limited involvement in the initial project costing. The Program Management Team generally considered the program cost-effective but highlighted missed opportunities and challenges that could have improved it. These included budget allocation issues, the need for a communication lead, and assistance for Program Research Fellows in improving their writing skills. Enhancing transparency between partners, particularly in financial reporting, was also identified as an area requiring attention to improve cost-effectiveness.

2.4.2. Delays in Programme's Activities

Delays, although often unforeseen and unintended, can exert a substantial influence on the overall success and efficiency of programme activities. They manifest as disruptions, setbacks, or deviations from planned timelines, with potential repercussions across various facets of programme implementation. This segment aims to explore the consequences of these delays on programme activities and underscores the significance of proactive strategies for mitigation and management.

i. **Challenges for Research Fellows:** Delays during the research preparation phase were attributed to diverse backgrounds and work commitments of research fellows. Academic researchers managed deadlines more effectively, while practitioner-researchers faced challenges due to professional commitments.

ii. **Delay in Drafting Research Outputs:** Delays were acknowledged within the National Advisory Group (NAG) in Kenya, particularly in drafting research outputs and result dissemination. These delays resulted from variations in workload among principal investigators (PIs) and the number of professional research fellows (PRFs) they oversaw.

iii. **Dissemination Delays:** Program Management Team (PMT) key informants acknowledged delays in disseminating research findings primarily due to the time required to conclude research and coordinate review processes.

2.4.3. Resource Utilization (Time and Finances)

Assessment of resource utilization focused on time and finances. The only responses received were from one GAG member, one NAG member, and two members of the PMT. A NAG respondent from Tanzania reported that time was efficiently utilized considering that the programme was able to apply a mix of in-person and virtual engagements to deliver content to targeted audiences. There was also a suggestion to the effect that finances were effectively utilized, particularly because the programme was led by the private sector and operated within its budget. There was a view that allocation of resources to PRFs and NAGs, was well-costed, but not clear the extent to which the costings were adequate to enable them to sufficiently deliver on their set mandates. The Ethiopian-based NAG respondent highlighted the efficient management of time, with most of the research works done in Ethiopia by the PRFs being completed as per schedule. The PRFs, despite their different competing responsibilities, remained committed and dedicated to utilizing their time effectively.

The PMT respondents offer varied perspectives on time and finances utilization. In Tanzania, they believed that the budget allocation and utilization were well-aligned with programme objectives. They emphasized the importance of integrating findings with other programs, showcasing efficient resource utilization. However, they expressed concerns about transparency in budget cuts and the need for improved communication. In general, the respondents recognize that the programme's finances were efficiently managed, delivering value for money. However, they highlighted certain instances where better communication and budget allocation could have enhanced efficiency. These include cases of budget cuts, travel expenses, and the need for more transparent communication about financial decisions.

2.4.4. Efficacy of Training and Capacity Building Programmes

The programme's effectiveness in providing training and capacity-building opportunities to partners and stakeholders along with access to relevant resources, networks and mentorship was evaluated through the responses of Global Advisory Groups (GAGs), the National Advisory Groups (NAGs), the Project Management Team (PMT) and the Professional Research Fellows (PRFs) from various countries:

i. **Program's Success in Building Capacity:** Key informants from different categories, including the Global Advisory Group (GAG), acknowledged the program's success in building capacity. They highlighted the effectiveness of capacity-building activities, particularly for members of the National Advisory Groups (NAG) from the government who were experts in water and sanitation but lacked a deep understanding of accountability. The training and capacity-building activities created awareness and

prompted discussions on the connections between accountability for water and other institutions, such as the auditor's office and parliament. These activities were seen as effective in bridging knowledge gaps.

ii. **Capacity-Building for PRFs:** PRFs received significant attention in terms of training and capacity building. Training sessions, including Writeshops and workshops on research design and data collection tools, were mentioned. These activities were appreciated by PRFs for their effectiveness in enhancing research skills and understanding of social accountability and water-related issues. The program's design, which combined physical and virtual training, was praised for its flexibility and impact on confidence building.

iii. **Networking Opportunities:** Networking opportunities were highlighted as a positive aspect of the program's capacity-building efforts. The program facilitated interactions among different stakeholders, creating forums where contacts and knowledge could be shared. This cross-pollination of knowledge was particularly beneficial for PRFs and other relevant program stakeholders. Networking was seen as a way to enhance capacity-building and collaboration.

iv. **Access to Resources:** The program's provision of relevant resources, such as articles and research materials, was appreciated by PRFs. It broadened their perspectives and allowed for further reading and research. Access to research documents and support from external investigators were considered beneficial for research and accountability-related areas.

v. **Impact of COVID-19 on Capacity-Building:** Some respondents mentioned the impact of COVID-19 on capacity-building opportunities. Workshops and dissemination events were affected by the pandemic, leading to limitations in training and mentorship activities. The pandemic posed challenges to in-person training and resource sharing.

vi. **Variations in Mentorship Levels:** PRFs from different countries noted variations in mentorship levels. While some PRFs praised the effectiveness of mentors, others raised concerns about regional disparities in attendance and mentorship. Clarity regarding the roles of Principal Investigators (PIs) in the accountability program was mentioned as necessary for improving mentorship.

vii. **Ripple Effect of Capacity-Building:** In Liberia, it was noted that the program's capacity-building efforts had a ripple effect. PRFs not only had their own capacities enhanced but also had the ability to train survey teams and provide capacity to other actors in the sector. This demonstrated the broader impact of capacity-building activities.

2.5. Sustainability and Scalability of the AfW Programme

The AfW programme had made effort to address the sustainability and scalability of its interventions and outcomes through several strategies as outlined below:

i. **Sustainability and Scalability through Local Empowering:** The program aimed at embedding its initiatives in local NGOs, training institutions, and government agencies. By doing so, it sought to ensure that knowledge and practices remained within the country and continued beyond the project's end. This approach was seen as fostering sustainability, as accountability for water practices would be carried forward by these local institutions.

ii. **Capacity Building for Sustainability:** A core element of the program's sustainability plan was the emphasis on building local capacity by engaging organizations from the Global South. This approach intended to safeguard the continued presence of acquired knowledge and findings within the region. The efforts put into capacity building were perceived as crucial for maintaining the expertise and skills required for similar programs in various countries and regions.

iii. **Sustainability through Partners:** The program effectively harnessed the power of partnerships and networks, bringing together diverse sector players. These collaborations provided essential resources and materials to bolster the program and facilitated the creation of a community of practice, enabling scalability. Partnerships and networking played a pivotal role in ensuring the sustainability and scalability of the program's outcomes.

iv. **Long-Term Integration of Research Findings:** To ensure sustainability, partner organizations were encouraged to weave research findings into their long-term strategies. The aim was to make accountability for water a permanent fixture on their agendas. This long-term commitment was recognized as pivotal in preserving the program's efforts.

v. **Alignment with Existing and Future Strategies:** Strategic alignment with partner organizations was a cornerstone of the program's sustainability approach. This ensured that accountability for water remained an enduring commitment, irrespective of the program's different phases. Partner organizations tailored their existing and future strategies to incorporate accountability issues, reinforcing the sustainability strategy.

vi. **Complementarity with Existing Interventions:** Program partners were encouraged to supplement their current and upcoming initiatives with research findings. This approach aimed to create sustainability through ongoing projects and efforts, emphasizing the importance of integrating accountability considerations into future programs.

vii. **Scalability through Partners**: Efforts were underway to expand the program's impact to other countries by engaging national and global stakeholders. This broader reach was essential for addressing water security and governance challenges on a larger scale. The program's goal was to mainstream accountability issues in both national and global practices, involving key stakeholders and aligning policies and implementations to ensure sustainability.

viii. **Leveraging Partnerships, Resources, and Networks:** The program actively formed partnerships with a range of stakeholders to address critical issues in water security. These collaborations included influential organizations like the World Bank and Sanitation and Water for All, with the aim of securing funding and scaling the program's lessons. The growing demand for accountability within the water sector was perceived as an opportunity for sustainability, with more NGOs and government institutions focusing on accountability.

2.6. Analysis of Cross-cutting Issues

2.6.1. Program Influence on Addressing Accountability Issues and Confidence Building in Research Design and Delivery as an Output of the AfW Program.

Influence on Addressing Accountability Issues

Participants overwhelmingly conveyed that their involvement in the AfW programme had significantly enhanced their ability to address accountability issues. One common theme that emerged is the boost in confidence. Participants reported feeling more comfortable, effective, and informed when discussing accountability issues related to water governance. The programme did not only improve participants' fundamental understanding of accountability but has also made them more aware of the importance of accountability from an evidence-based approach.

Impact on Confidence and Ability in Research Design and Delivery

The AfW programme has not only influenced participants in addressing accountability issues but has also significantly impacted their confidence and ability to design and deliver research. Participants from various countries shared their experiences in this regard. Firstly, participants reported feeling more confident in their research capabilities. Secondly, the programme has prompted participants to explore new ways of conducting research. It has introduced them to innovative approaches, enhancing their research skills and broadening their horizons. Lastly, participants have been encouraged to apply their research skills beyond the water sector. They mentioned utilizing these skills in other areas, such as sanitation, waste management, and political accountability. This demonstrates the programme's transferability and its ability to empower individuals to tackle accountability challenges in various contexts.

2.6.2. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Programme's Innovative Arrangements

The programme adopted an innovative approach to delivery which aimed to provide ownership of the research to practitioners and sectors stakeholders These are summarized in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Comparative Analysis of Strengths and Weaknesses of Innovative Arrangements

Innovative Approach	Strengths	Weaknesses
The GAG Approach	• They played a crucial role in addressing weak water policies, programs, and laws. • While their initial intended formal oversight role was rejected due to contractual limitations, they actively supported the programme by attending meetings and providing practical advice and guidance. • Their contributions were instrumental in driving the programme towards success, particularly in securing financial and non-financial partnerships for the second phase. • The GAGs also facilitated knowledge sharing through face-to-face and virtual meetings and provided emotional support to country-level programme staff. • Their diverse composition, including members from various sectors and regions, allowed for a broad spectrum of perspectives, contributing to the programme's overall effectiveness.	• The weaknesses of the GAGs primarily stemmed from their reluctance to assume a formal oversight role due to their lack of contractual standing in the programme. This resulted in a less active oversight body than initially envisioned. However, these limitations were compensated for by their advisory role, which remained valuable.
The NAG Approach	• They played a pivotal role in improving water management and promoting accountability at the national level. • NAGs were effective in engaging with government entities, fostering closer government engagement for ultimate ownership of the programme. • They created a cohort of engaged partners in key regions, ensuring that research findings were relevant to stakeholders and influential sector partners. • NAGs provided mentorship, support, and guidance, and their involvement boosted the legitimacy and attendance of government meetings. • The strengths of the NAGs also included regular meetings, the review of programme work, timely feedback, and a positive intention to advocate for change. • Members of the NAGs were highly committed, professionally appropriate, and held influential positions in their respective organizations, making their contributions impactful. • .	• The weaknesses of the NAGs included challenges related to scheduling meetings that accommodated the busy schedules of high-ranking members. • Coordination efforts were required to ensure active participation. • Additionally, some NAG members lacked familiarity with the concept of water accountability, and their interest in the subject varied. • The sustainability of NAGs also raised concerns, particularly in terms of how their roles would be maintained beyond the research phase. In 2022, Ethiopia had drafted a strategy (ToR) to guide on sustainability of the NAGs (e.g., secretariat and its running costs), but the same was not finalized. Status for Kenya and Tanzania towards developing a sustainability framework for NAGs remained unclear.

Innovative Approach	Strengths	Weaknesses
	• The multi-disciplinary composition of the National Advisory Groups and consortium members was another strength. It allowed for a diverse range of perspectives, including those from civil society organizations, government entities, NGOs, and academic institutions, fostering a holistic approach to addressing water governance challenges. • The diversity among NAG members, including academics, researchers, development practitioners, gender experts, and water experts, enriched the group's perspectives and effectiveness in addressing accountability issues	
The PMT structure	• The PMT, led by PASGR and Water Witness International, exhibited several strengths. It displayed resilience and adaptability in the face of challenges, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. • Despite facing changes in staff and potential disruptions, the team managed to adapt and successfully deliver online training in Arusha, which demonstrated their ability to navigate difficulties. • The division of responsibilities among various institutions within the consortium was a notable strength. By not centralizing all functions in one institution, they ensured a balanced approach to programme management, mitigating the risk of concentrating too much power in a single entity. • Furthermore, the PMT's extensive reach across 26 African countries, facilitated by PASGR's Pan African network, enabled equitable access and interaction with national institutions. This inclusivity fostered advocacy and collaboration among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers at both the national and global levels. • Finally, despite some challenges, the PMT managed to maintain good working relationships among all consortium partners, ensuring a professional and collaborative atmosphere for achieving project goals.	• One significant weakness in the PMT structure was budget management issues. There were instances of overspending by consortium partners, which had to be addressed to keep the programme within budget. Although these challenges were managed, they did create some friction within the consortium. • Additionally, leadership changes within the programme management team, like the transition of programme leads, introduced some instability, and affected the overall management and outlook of the project.

Innovative Approach	Strengths	Weaknesses
The PRF approach	• They brought essential research skills to the table, producing valuable fieldwork, including focus groups, interviews, and surveys. • Their ability to generate useful insights through grounded research design was a significant asset. • Moreover, the PRFs' affiliations with local water sector institutions ensured that accountability issues became integrated into daily work routines. This contributed to the sustainability and institutionalization of water accountability practices at the local level. • Additionally, the PRFs' commitment and motivation, along with their capacity-building activities, not only enhanced their research skills but also contributed to their respective institutions' research capacity and the broader goal of promoting water accountability.	• The PRFs faced challenges in terms of analyzing and writing up their research, particularly for those who did not come from academic backgrounds. • Some academic PRFs tended to produce overly lengthy reports, while all PRFs struggled to complete their research within required deadlines while juggling their regular responsibilities. • Another weakness was the limited linkage with their host institutions, which impacted their ability to conduct research effectively. • Dependence on National Research Coordinators (NRC) and Principal Investigators (PI) for guidance also slowed down research progress in some of the countries. • The selection process for PRFs was crucial, and in some cases, the commitment and dedication of PRFs varied. It was noted that improvements could be made in selecting PRFs who were more committed to the programme's goals. It emerged that selection of PRFs was severely impacted by the onset of COVID-19 pandemic (people didn't have bandwidth to engage and delay meant previously lined up partners didn't engage). • Furthermore, having PRFs largely drawn from academic backgrounds led to a lack of practical experience from development practitioners, potentially limiting the scope of research insights. • Lastly, low ability to meet analysis and writing deadlines was a shared weakness among the PRFs. Overcommitment alongside their regular work responsibilities resulted in a backlog of work towards the end of the project.

3.1. Conclusions

The end line evaluation of the Accountability for Water Program aimed to assess its effectiveness, relevance, and sustainability. The program demonstrated relevance by emphasizing the importance of accountability in water-related issues but noted a need for practical solutions and improved knowledge exchange among partners. It effectively addressed community dynamics related to water accountability through research, training, and awareness-building activities, making valuable recommendations for improvement. The program's impact was evident in enhancing government understanding of accountability and triggering positive responses, such as transparency and addressing state capture in governance.

However, sustainability and creating an enabling environment for accountability remain challenges, and the need for incentives for duty bearers and community empowerment was highlighted. Ongoing dialogue, capacity building, and a commitment to water sector accountability were underscored as essential. The Accountability for Water program laid a foundation for accountability and holds promise for a more accountable and sustainable future in water resources management.

The program's outreach and research findings were disseminated through webinars, meetings, and presentations. While it contributed to the water governance and WASH sector in multiple countries by engaging stakeholders, promoting community involvement, and addressing sector needs and priorities, it awaits feedback on its effectiveness from this evaluation.

In terms of effectiveness, the project made substantial progress in promoting accountability for water through knowledge generation, sharing, and capacity building. It developed skills, inspired future researchers, and actively engaged stakeholders, leaving a lasting legacy in the field of water accountability. The program shared valuable knowledge with a wide range of stakeholders and inspired a new generation of researchers and practitioners committed to advancing water accountability, ensuring the project's legacy endures.

The program strategically integrated with partner organizations, aligning with their long-term strategies and complementing existing interventions. Scalability efforts aim to expand the program's impact to other countries and mainstream accountability issues. Partnerships, resources, and networks play a vital role in supporting sustainability and scalability, despite challenges in research design and findings. While acknowledging challenges like limited resources and low prioritization of water accountability, opportunities exist in the growing demand for water accountability.

3.2. Recommendations

The success of any programme partially relies on the valuable insights and experiences of its participants. In the case of the accountability for water governance programme, the recommendations gathered from the people involved provide a clear path forward for the next phase of this important initiative. These recommendations have been thoughtfully shared by those who have directly contributed to the programme. They cover a wide range of areas, from general strategies to specific changes and the continuation of successful practices.

3.2.1. General Recommendations:

The following recommendations cover overall issues that may need improvement during future phases of the programme:

i. **Effectiveness of Meetings:** Respondents emphasized the importance of mixing physical and online meetings. They recommend incorporating both formats, perhaps on a quarterly or biannual basis, to encourage better interaction among stakeholders from different institutions. This would ensure that certain activities are more effective when conducted in person.

ii. **Government Commitment:** It was suggested that countries participating in programs should secure commitments and allocate resources from duty bearers, including governments for making programs more relevant and impactful within the water sector.

iii. **Budget Transparency:** Respondents highlighted the need for better budget planning and transparency at the outset of programs. They recommended that budgets should be agreed upon collectively, with each partner managing their allocated budget. Quarterly group meetings to discuss budgets were also suggested to enhance transparency and communication among partners.

iv. **Open Challenge Culture:** Effective communication and fostering a culture where individuals can openly challenge ideas without feeling criticized were recommended. This open challenge culture is seen to improve processes and outcomes within the programme.

v. **Prompt Publication of Research Findings:** It was recommended that research findings should be published promptly as part of research deliverables. This ensures that data does not become outdated and that information reaches a wider audience, thereby maximizing the impact of the research.

vi. Monitoring and Evaluation: There is need to establish a robust monitoring and evaluation framework from the beginning of the programme. This will allow for the continuous assessment of programme activities and outcomes, enabling timely adjustments and improvements. For example, the weekly meetings between PASGR, WWI and NRC were used as regular monitoring mechanisms during phase I, and can be carried forward to phase two as a best practice.

vii. Cross-Sector Collaboration: There is need to encourage collaboration with other sectors, such as health, education, and environmental protection, to address interconnected issues. Water governance often intersects with these sectors, and coordinated efforts can yield more comprehensive solutions. One of the findings of the research from Ethiopia is that this inter-sectoral collaboration, though improving, is still wanting and needs further measures, including making collaboration commitments to be accounted for rather than depend on the volition of member organizations in planned and agreed cooperation or collaboration.

viii. Community Engagement: There is need to place a strong emphasis on community engagement and involvement in decision-making processes related to water governance. Empower local communities to have a voice and participate actively in shaping policies and practices.

ix. Data Accessibility: There is need to ensure that research data collected during the programme is easily accessible and open to the public. This promotes transparency and allows other researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders to build upon the findings.

x. Technological Innovation: There is need to embrace technological innovations, such as digital tools and data analytics, to enhance data collection, analysis, and dissemination. This can streamline research processes and increase the programme's impact.

xi. Long-Term Impact Assessment: There is need to implement a mechanism for assessing the long-term impact of the programme on water governance and accountability. This could involve periodic reviews or external evaluations to track progress and lessons learned.

3.2.2. Recommendations on Changes for the Next Phase:

The following recommendations arise from aspects of the project's implementation that did not work well that ought to be remedied or improved in future phases of the programme:

i. Operational Memorandum of Understanding: To avert likely conflicts, communication related challenges, and perceptions of budgetary misappropriations amongst the PMT members and consortium partners, there is need to formulate a memorandum of understanding during the formative stages of the programme so that the roles, responsibilities, and expectations for each consortium partner are clearly spelt out.

ii. Common Learning Platforms: The PRF key informants highlighted the importance of continuous mentorship, access to resources and networking and mentorship opportunities were also emphasized while some raised

concerns about regional disparities in attendance and mentorship. Some key informants from NAG and GAG suggested the need for common platforms to enhance resource access and sharing hence promoting self-learning and cross-country collaboration.

iii. Ownership and Scaling of Work: Some PRFs expressed difficulties in scaling up the work they had done due to concerns related to the ownership of content produced. Ensuring that research outcomes have a lasting impact can be challenging when navigating issues related to intellectual property or shared ownership. There is need therefore of establishing a framework of taking up full or partial ownership of research materials that would otherwise be deemed to infringe on intellectual property rights of third-party entities.

iv. Stronger Action Focus: Respondents suggested that in the next phase, there should be a stronger emphasis on the action component of action research. They noted that the first phase primarily focused on research and recommended a more balanced approach in the future. This would involve translating research findings into practical actions and solutions.

v. Advocacy Plan Implementation: There was a call for the implementation of advocacy plans developed during the research phase. Implementing these plans is seen to strengthen and sustain accountability in the water sector, ensuring that research leads to real-world change.

vi. Regional Programme Offices: Respondents proposed the establishment of regional offices for accountability in the water sector. These offices would facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing among institutions in different regions, contributing to a stronger community of practice and better coordination of efforts.

vii. Resource Mobilization: To address resource limitations, the need for resource mobilization mechanisms was highlighted. Finding ways to secure more substantial resources is crucial for making a significant impact in the sector, especially in resource-constrained environments.

viii. Risk Assessment: There is need to conduct a thorough risk assessment at the outset of the next phase to identify potential challenges and develop mitigation strategies. This proactive approach can help prevent disruptions and setbacks.

ix. Inclusive Research Design: There is need to ensure that the research design is inclusive of marginalized and vulnerable populations. Consider their unique needs and challenges in water governance to promote equity and social justice. It seems like this was not adequately met in Phase I.

x. Policy Integration: Advocate for the integration of water governance and accountability principles and practices into national and regional policies and legislation. This can help institutionalize good practices and ensure long-term impact. Indeed, most challenging aspect across countries is getting the laws (policies, regulations, standards, etc.) applied.

3.2.3. Recommendations on Best Practices that Require Further Enhancement

The recommendations point to aspects of the programme that worked well that may require further enhancements or scale up in the future phases:

i.   **Accountability Initiatives:** Respondents expressed gratitude for the accountability initiatives and stressed the importance of their continuation. These initiatives empower citizens to demand their rights and responsibilities, contributing to improved services and accountability in the sector.

ii.   **Citizen Awareness:** The success of programs in heightened awareness among citizens and providing them with a platform to express their concerns and experiences was a best practice that requires further attention in future phases. Continuing to empower communities to voice their issues is seen as a positive aspect to carry forward into the next phase.

iii. **Effective Partnerships:** Several respondents appreciated the partnerships and collaboration with international and government partners. They emphasized the importance of such collaborations in implementing programs effectively and recommended their continuation.

iv.   **Impact on Policy:** Respondents highlighted their role in contributing to programme design plans carried out by governments and international partners based on the insights and learning they had acquired from the AfW programme. They viewed this as a positive impact on policy design and implementation in their respective countries, underscoring the need to continue such contributions.

v.   **Knowledge Sharing Beyond Borders:** Expand the programme's knowledge-sharing efforts beyond national borders. Encourage cross-country exchanges of experiences and best practices to foster a regional community of practitioners.

vi.   **Advocacy Campaigns:** Organize advocacy campaigns at the regional and international levels to raise awareness about the importance of water governance and accountability. Engage with global stakeholders to drive policy changes and support.

vii. **Cross-Generational Learning:** Facilitate cross-generational learning within the programme. Encourage experienced practitioners to mentor younger researchers and leaders, ensuring the transfer of knowledge and expertise.

viii. **Capacity Building:** Continue to invest in capacity building, not only for researchers but also for community leaders, policymakers, and government officials. Building local expertise is essential for the programme's sustainability.

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